

Release of Hasina demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different organisations at home and abroad condemned the arrest of former prime minister and Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina and demanded her immediate release.

The US unit of AL demanded unconditional release of Hasina within 24 hours at a protest rally at Actoria, New York, yesterday.

Terming the arrest anti-democratic, the leaders also demanded resignation of the council of advisers and saying, "If they remain in office, the advisers would be considered an enemy of the people."

The leaders at the rally insisted on sending the army back to the barracks and demanded immediate identification of the joint forces personnel who are violating human rights. If anybody tries to organise a council meeting without Sheikh Hasina, he would be considered an enemy of the nation, they observed.

The US chapter leaders decided to send a lawyer from the US to assist Hasina fight the charges brought against her. Besides, the leaders would also hold a sit-in in front of the Bangladesh Consulate and the New York Times office on July 16 and hold a protest rally in front of the United Nations Headquarters on July 19.

Sajjadur Rahman Sajjad, acting general secretary of AL US unit, organised the rally.

Meanwhile, the AL Austria unit held a protest rally at Vienna's Stad Park. Nazrul Islam, former president of Bangladesh Press Club and convener of Bangladesh Genocide 1971, said the government orchestrated the plot to arrest Hasina and tarnish the image of the AL chief and through this the interim government has quickened its end.

Besides, eminent writers, poets and intellectuals of the country including Syed Shamsul Haque, Selina Hossain, Nirmolendu Goon considered the arrest of Hasina and the order to send her to jail a plot to harass her.

Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) termed the case farcical and said it would create dispute over the transparency of the court and legal procedure.

Without the petition of the investigation officer and the approval of a magistrate such an arrest is conspiratorial and intentional.

Fifty-one teachers of Dhaka University in a joint statement said the arrest of Hasina points to the double standards of the government where political leaders are being harassed and arrested for demanding free, fair and transparent elections and the so-called reformists are being entertained for the formation of new parties even during the period of emergency.

Bangladesh Muktiuddho Projanna League leaders including its President AK Faiyazul

lajuddin undergoes medical checkup

UNB, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed underwent a medical check-up at Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore yesterday.

Cardiologist Maurice Choo said that the president is "in very good health", according to a release from Bangabhaban.

32 girl students fall unconscious at Savar school

UNB, Savar

At least 32 girl students and a teacher fell unconscious at Polashbari Haji Joyenuddin High School due to a mysterious disease yesterday.

On information, GOC of Savar Cantonment Maj Gen Ashab Chowdhury rushed to the school and arranged admission of 29 students and the teacher to Saver Combined Military Hospital.

Panic spread in villages following the incident.

The authorities declared the school closed for two days.

Three students who regained sense in a local clinic were sent back home.

After regaining consciousness, Hena, a student of class VI, said she felt headache, pains in hands and legs and tendency of vomiting before falling unconscious at about 9:30am.

Meanwhile, our correspondent reports that the condition of the students of Adiabad Islamia High School and College of Raipura upazila in Narsinghdi district has further improved, and no-one was fainted or admitted to the hospital yesterday.

"A total of 30 students were admitted to Narsinghdi District Hospital since Wednesday. Most of them were either treated here and sent to their home or referred to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) for better treatment," Resident Medical Officer (RMO) of Narsinghdi District Hospital Dr Tutul told The Daily Star over telephone.

There are only five students now in the District Hospital, he said, adding that the medical team that came from Dhaka is treating the students and would visit the school spot again to clear the whole picture.

Quoting the special team, the RMO said it is called a mass psychogenic illness that affects mostly children aged between 14 and 15.

"It is a type of psychological problem called mass hysteria. It usually affects the young and females and spreads among those who are staying at the same place," said DMCH Principal and Prof of Medicine MA Foyez, adding that it usually spreads by seeing or hearing from close quarters.

"It is not an incident of infection and there is nothing to be panicked," said Prof Foyez who is supervising the treatment.

Rath Jatra celebrated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hindu devotees yesterday celebrated the annual Jagannath Rath Jatra (chariot procession), one of their major religious festivals, across the country amid festivity and religious fervour.

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (Iskcon) brought out a chariot procession from its temple at Swamibagh in the city at around 4:15pm, seeking divine blessings for universal peace and harmony.

The procession marched through different streets in the capital and ended at Dhakeswari National Temple. The Rath will return from Dhakeswari Temple on July 24.

Thousands of devotees from different walks of life took part in the procession.

The historical Dhamrai Rath Jatra was also brought out at 3:00pm in Dhamrai.

On the occasion, Iskcon has organised nine-day programmes, including Kirtan, recitation from Gita, discussion, and culture programmes at its Swamibagh and Wari temples.



PHOTO: PID

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed launches the Indigenous Species of Fish Preservation and Expansion Campaign 2007 through releasing fish fry in the pond of Government Haroganga College in Munshiganj yesterday.

DHAKA TODAY

Seminar

Mechanical Engineering Division, Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) organises a seminar titled 'Nephron system: A lubricating oil dialysis system for optimal engine health'. Venue: Seminar room, IEB headquarters. Time: 5:00pm.

Exhibition

The inaugural ceremony of an exhibition titled 'Kaththokra Show on arts and crafts' will be held. Venue: Zainul Gallery-2, Institute of Fine Arts. Time: 11:00am. The exhibition will run till July 23 from 10:00am to 7:00pm everyday.

Workshop

Chittagong Port Authority and The World Bank will jointly organise a workshop on 'Improving port efficiency: Sharing international experience of private container terminal operations'. Venue: Hotel Purbani. Time: 9:00am.

Discussion

Greater Mymensingh Cultural Forum will hold a discussion titled 'Poet Moniruddin Yusuf and Shahanaama by Ferdous'. Venue: Iranian Cultural Centre auditorium. Time: 6:00pm.

Seminar on reforms

The Centre for Governance Studies organises a seminar on 'Policy debates

on reforms'. Venue: Hotel Sheraton. Time: 9:30am.

Prize giving ceremony

The prize giving ceremony of the IT Festival 2007 organised by Computer Club of International Islamic University, Chittagong Dhaka Campus will be held. Venue: Russian Cultural Centre. Time: 11:00am.

Launching ceremony

The Ministry of the Industries organises the launching ceremony of Small and Medium Enterprise Foundation (SMEF). Venue: Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel. Time: 11:00am.

Exhibition

Paper Studio organises a unique exhibition titled 'It's in the paper...' with the artworks of 10 contemporary prominent artists. Venue: Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts. Time: 6:00pm.

Hamdard Seminar

Hamdard organises a seminar titled 'Hundred years of Hamdard in healthcare, education and human welfare'. Venue: Hotel Sheraton. Time: 7:30pm.

WEATHER TODAY

Rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty to squally wind is likely at most places over Chittagong, Khulna, Barisal, Dhaka, Rajshahi and Sylhet divisions in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy to heavy rainfalls are also likely at places over the country. Met office said, adding that day temperature may fall by 1-2 degree Celsius.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 34.4 degree Celsius was recorded at Ishwardi and the lowest of 26 degrees at Cox's Bazar, Chittagong, Feni, Chuadanga, Kutubdia and Jessore.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:48pm today and rises at 5:21am tomorrow.

The highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	31.4	26.6	86	86
Chittagong	28.7	26.0	95	96
Rajshahi	34.2	26.2	87	81
Khulna	31.0	27.5	81	88
Barisal	31.0	26.8	87	84
Sylhet	33.3	27.2	90	95
Cox's Bazar	28.8	26.0		

The case against her

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and commissioning of Siddhirganj power plant in Narayanganj in 2000, Azam said in his complaint. And his company Eastcoast Trading Private Ltd was appointed local agent of the Russian company when Sheikh Hasina was prime minister.

Sheikh Selim was paid over Tk2.99 crore in eight cheques between October 24, 2000 and March 14, 2001.

Another case was filed against Hasina on April 9 for extorting Tk3 crore.

In the June 12 first information report (FIR), Azam mentioned that Sheikh Hasina's cousin the then lawmaker Sheikh Selim tried to be local agent of the Russian company TPE. Selim on different occasions tried to influence the TPE chief to serve his purpose, he added.

As all his attempts turned futile, Selim started putting pressure, and Azam met Selim at his Banani residence with the proposal of appointing him consultant for the second phase of the work and told him that he would be given a large amount of commission during the phase, the FIR said.

Angry at the proposal, Selim threat-

ened to stop the work with the help of Hasina (the then PM) if the commission was not paid. Negotiations on payment of the money continued at Selim's residence.

Selim also threatened that the complainant would not be able to withdraw any bill from the PDB if he failed to pay him commission from the work. Threats were issued between June and July, 2000, the complainant said.

In July, 2000, they reached a verbal agreement for payment of two per cent commission amounting \$5.8 lakh (equivalent to a little over Tk2.99 crore) to Selim, Azam said. The commission was paid at Selim's residence in eight cheques of Standard Chartered Bank and Southeast Bank from October 24, 2000 to February 14, 2001, he added.

Selim did not interfere with the work after getting the commission, the complainant said, adding that many people including executives of his company are aware of the payment of commission to Selim.

No one above law

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government explained his government's stand at an exchange of opinion meeting at Shilpakala Academy auditorium here yesterday morning. People from different professions and government officials attended the meeting organised by the district administration.

The CA urged the people to come forward and extend cooperation to the government in its drive against corruption, saying that it is not possible for the government alone to eliminate corruption from the country.

"Hate corruption and raise your voice against corruption," he said and noted that a handful of people thrives on this vice, while the majority suffers.

He said the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) will take up short, mid-and long-term programme to curb corruption.

Extending support to the election roadmap announced by the chief election commissioner, the chief adviser reaffirmed that the present government is determined to hold the parliamentary elections by

December 2008 in a free, fair and neutral manner.

He said the government is carrying out efforts, including institutional and policy reforms, as per aspiration of the people to create a level playing field for elections.

The CA said he is sure that the Election Commission (EC) will be able to hold elections following the path of the roadmap and the government will provide all-out support to the EC to this end.

He noted that the Election Commission is also formulating electoral policy guidelines and other related matters and will consult all sections of people and others concerned for holding a free and fair election to give democracy a strong footing.

With this end in view, honest, dedicated and qualified people will be encouraged to contest the elections.

He said a flawless voter list with photographs is a prerequisite for fair election, which is a longstanding demand of all, and the EC is working

Moments before the arrest

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Adviser Barrister Mainul Husein.

"This is not a good thing you are doing," a member of the joint forces quoted Hasina to have told Mainul. "I will soon come out free. And then none will be spared. Not even you."

She reportedly told Mainul that in the past he had visited her for help, and he would do so in the future as well.

As soon as her conversation with Mainul was over, the joint forces members seized her cellphone.

"Hasina appeared to be confident and was prepared for the arrest," said the member of the joint forces.

When the law enforcers entered her residence at around 5:00am, Hasina was saying her prayers on the first

floor. She asked her staff to tell the law enforcers to stay on the ground floor.

After some time, when a few of the officers went upstairs to meet her Hasina became agitated.

"What so many of you have come here to take me away?" she questioned. "Why are you here? Do you carry any warrant?"

The next moment she calmed down and asked the law enforcers if they would like to have breakfast. She then gave them tea and biscuit, and then she went inside her bedroom to get ready.

When she came down the stairs, Hasina stopped in front of her staff's room where her personal aides had gathered.

"Don't loose heart and patience," she told them. "Truth will prevail."

AL activists enraged

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the entrance and chanted slogans protesting her arrest.

Several hundred protesters joined a procession brought out by Mahila Awami League from Raishahab Bazar area near the court at around 10:00am soon after the CMM's court sent Sheikh Hasina to jail.

As the procession reached Chitra Mahal, police intercepted but the demonstrators continued chanting slogans, prompting the law enforcers to charge baton.

Soon the demonstrators spread to English Road, Goal Nagar and Malitola areas and pelted the police with bricksbats. Police opened fire, injuring seven AL activists.

Three of the injured -- Shahadat Hossain, Shaful Islam and Mohammad Liton -- were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). Four others took first aid from different clinics.

Police also arrested three female activists during the chaos.

Sazzad, a sub-inspector, Zamir, an assistant sub-inspector, and Razzak, a constable, were injured in the skirmish, police said.

The female activists who thronged

the CMM court area hearing the news of Hasina's arrest were seen crying or chanting slogans protesting the arrest.

A bus was set on fire at Zero Point in the city last night.

It could not be known immediately how the bus caught fire around 8:15pm amid tight security.

Firefighters who rushed to the spot and doused the fire said two seats of the bus were burned. They, however, could not say whether anyone set the bus on fire or it originated from other sources.

Our DU correspondent adds: Some 20 to 25 leaders and activists of pro-AL Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) brought out a procession on Dhaka University (DU) campus yesterday morning protesting the AL chiefs' arrest.

At around 8:40am, the demonstrators marched towards Suryasen Hall from the Arts Faculty Building where they had gathered since the dawn.

The BCL activists chanted slogans warning against any attempt to harm Hasina.

A good number of police personnel were deployed on the campus following the protest procession. Members of

intelligence agencies were also put on alert.

Our Kishoreganj correspondent reports: Several leaders and workers of the AL and its front organisations were injured when police clubbed a procession of over a hundred people at Pakundia upazila headquarters in the district at around 1:00pm yesterday.

The procession was brought to protest the arrest of Hasina.

Police arrested Barudia union AL President Bazur Rahman and former president of Pakundia upazila Chhatra League Azizul Haq Hiron.

Additional police forces were deployed to avert any untoward incident.

Our staff correspondent reports from Khulna: Several protest processions were brought out on Khulna Railway Station Road, Labon Chora, Cemetery Road, Dakbungalow Road, Court Road, Khulna MM City College, BIDC Road and Phulbari in the city.

Police charged batons to disperse the demonstrators on Khulna Railway Station Road at 9:30am.

The demonstrators chanted slogans demanding unconditional release of their party chief and tried to

estly and neutrally without yielding to any unwarranted pressure or interference.

He also asked them to engage people in implementing government programme and to take opinion of people, particularly grassroots ones, in planning and thinking and to reflect people's aspiration in their activities.

Responding to local demands raised by the local speakers, he assured that his government would try to meet the demands and carry out development works as far as possible. He informed that he has discussed with ministries concerned and donors the construction of Padma Bridge and hoped it would be materialised.

The CA himself took note of the demands, proposals and problems raised by the locals. Principal Secretary to the Chief Adviser Ali Imam Majumdar and Home Secretary Abdul Karim, who were on the dais, also took note.

reach their party offices when the law enforcers intercepted.

Joint forces, Rab and police have been deployed as part of beefed up security measures in the city.

Our Mymensingh correspondent adds: Agitating youths damaged five vehicles near Mashkanda inter-district bus terminal yesterday noon while BCL activists brought out a procession on Phulbaria Degree College campus protesting the arrest of AL chief.

Police dispersed a procession of BCL at Poura Bazar in Sujanagar upazila, our Pabna correspondent adds.

BCL activists of Barisal Law College brought out a protest procession in the city in the afternoon, reports our Barisal correspondent.

Additional law enforcers have been deployed at different points in the city.

A correspondent in Gazipur reports: A group of people brought out a procession around 9:30pm on Azimuddin College Road protesting the arrest of Sheikh Hasina.

state of emergency is still on, the possibility of such violence is little," he said.

Some people said it is very difficult to say nowadays where the country is heading.

"Now it is not possible to say whether the country is going forward towards better days or it is destined to drown. Either the country will move forward or it will become a puppet government like the one in Afghanistan, and a group of people will fish in the murky waters," said a shop owner in Karwan Bazar in the capital.

Hearing the news of Hasina's arrest rickshaw puller Pradip Karmakar said, "We don't think much about such things as our situation remains the same always."

Jamal Uddin, a trader on Elephant Road in the capital said, "It seems that the government has come to power only to arrest high profile leaders."

"Arresting high profile leaders like Hasina is not the main duty of the government", he said adding, it is not helpful for democracy. "Jamaat and extremist elements are getting indulgent!" he said.

Some people however said they are experiencing relative peace during the current regime and with the arrest of Hasina the government proved that no one is above the law.

Shafiqul Islam, an official of a non-governmental organisation, said the legal system speaks about equality for all and if the allegation of any crime against Hasina is proven, she must be punished.

"We witnessed widespread corruption by our leaders during successive regimes while both the party chiefs were tight-lipped regarding the matter," said Shahinur Rahman, a banker.

When the people of the country were struggling to ensure a meal a day, political leaders made money through corruption, he said.

An employee of Petrobangla said the situation is much better now during the present government's regime.

"We, the common people want peace that we didn't get during the regimes of BNP and AL governments," he said.

SWEET DISTRIBUTION

Meanwhile reports received from several places said the police obstructed processions protesting the arrest of Sheikh Hasina at many places but they did not take any action when some people expressed their joy in public and distributed sweets on streets following the arrest.

Sweets were distributed in Rajshahi and Mymensingh celebrating Sheikh Hasina's arrest, our correspondents reported.

Our Rajshahi correspondent reported that three Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) employees Rafique, Sadek and Abbas distributed three packets of sweets around 11:30pm in front of the office of deputy inspector general of Rajshahi Divisional Police at Bheripara in the city.

The three were distributing sweets telling people that those were gifts from a local ward commissioner on the occasion of Hasina's arrest, said a shopkeeper.

Rafique, Sadek and Abbas told reporters present at the scene that Abul Hashim, commissioner of ward no 5 of RCC had employed them to distribute the sweets.

When contacted, Hashim denied employing anyone to distribute sweets.

Our Mymensingh correspondent reported that a group of people distributed sweets at Station Road, Kirtipur and Purahit Para of the town giving rise to a mixed reaction among the people.

Kotwali police however said they knew nothing about the sweet distribution following Hasina's arrest.

Obituary

Mohammad Ahammadul Huq, father of Coordinating Committee Member of National People's Party Engr Enamul Huq Enam, passed away due to a cardiac arrest yesterday in his Chittagong residence yesterday, says a press release.

National People's Party, in a condolence message, prayed for salvation of the departed soul and expressed sympathy to the bereaved family.

Death anniversary



from Sherpur.

Students, friends, relatives and admirers are requested to pray for the salvation of his departed soul.

Today is the 33rd death anniversary of Prof Syed Hamidur Rahman, an educationist, says a press release.

He hailed

Duta's former president Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique said the arrest of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina is against the rule of law as she was not given a recourse to the law.

"Hasina's arrest is not a mere arrest of a person; this is an arrest of a democratic voice because during the ongoing state of emergency she has been talking in favour of the people," he said.

Duta President Prof Sadrul Amin declined to comment on the issue.

Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Dhaka University Prof Harun-Or-Rashid said Sheikh Hasina's arrest in connection with so-called extortions and violent political incidents will make the people angry and concerned.

Pro-AL teachers' Blue Panel Convener Prof Hossain Monsur said, "The arrest of Bangabandhu's daughter Sheikh Hasina means an attempt to destroy democracy."

Our Rajshahi correspondent reported that prominent writer