

# Hasina arrested

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against me have been brought only to hold me back from the next general election."

On June 13, Managing Director of East Coast Trading Ltd Azam J Chowdhury filed the case at Gulshan Police Station, accusing her of extorting, with others, Tk 2.96 crore from him for the installation work of a 210-megawatt power plant at Siddhirganj.

Some 1,000 members of the joint forces mostly from the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and the police sealed off the Dhanmondi Road No 5 area round about 4:40am in driving rain.

A 30-member dog squad along with at least 100 Rab and police members entered the Sudha Sadan premises at around 4:50am. Five minutes later, as they rapped on the door, Hasina asked her staff to let them in and tell them to wait on the ground floor.

She said she would see them but not before saying her morning prayers, a personal staffer of her told The Daily Star.

Immediately after gaining entrance, the forces snapped all land phone lines and seized all mobile phones in the house.

Minutes later, Sheikh Hasina came downstairs with her husband. "Why are you here? What wrong do you think I have done?" the staff quoted her as asking the waiting security personnel.

In reply, one of the joint forces men said, "We have specific charges against you and we are going to take you to court."

The last ones to talk to Hasina over phone were her son Sajeeb Wajed Joy and her daughter Saima Wajed Putul, both from the United States, and also her sister Sheikh Rehana. But the conversations ended abruptly as the phone lines were cut.

Earlier on Sunday night, she returned from the Bangabandhu Memorial Bhaban at around 10 and told all her relatives and staff that she was going to be picked up shortly. She asked them to be patient and not to panic.

At around 2:00am, her police protection was withdrawn. They were ordered to report back to the Rajarbagh Police Lines immediately.

During the two-and-a-half-hour raid, the law enforcers rummaged about all three floors of the building. They also sifted through her files and documents.

At that time, the former premier was accompanied by Wajed Miah

and two of her relatives--Shamim and Tutul. Her personal staffers were asked to leave the house at around 5:00am.

The joint forces set up at least three barricades on the road leading to the Sudha Sadan. Hundreds of Rab and police men stood guard throughout a two-kilometre radius of the residence.

They began taking position at 4:40am. Soon around one hundred intelligence officials including those from the military were seen going inside the Sudha Sadan.

At 7:30 in the morning, the AL chief, a never-say-die spirit, was walked into a navy blue SUV with tinted glasses. A 20-vehicle convoy carried her straight to the CMM Court as the road was kept free of traffic.

A smiling and seemingly unwavering Hasina in a white sari and white scarf around her head was waving at the TV cameras when she was brought to the court at 7:50am. She was escorted to the courtroom of Magistrate Kamrunnahar through a huge crowd.

There presented, she gave a rousing statement defending herself against the charges when hundreds of AL activists and supporters were chanting slogans outside.

At one stage, some of the party faithful came to blows with the on-duty policemen.

Besides, the AL-backed lawyers clamouring for access to the courtroom had heated arguments with law enforcement officers.

The hearing continued for over two hours. Lawyers spoke alternately for Hasina, but to no avail. The court rejected their plea for bail and set August 15 as the date for the next hearing.

Among others, AL leaders Motia Chowdhury, former law minister Abdul Matin Khasru, Kamrul Islam, Sahara Khatun, Dr Dipu Moni stood for Hasina.

As the proceedings ended, she was whisked off the court premises. But meantime thousands gathered outside as the law enforcers struggled to free the road. The slogans calling for Hasina's release echoed through the area.

As things began to get worse with the AL supporters trying to stop the car carrying Hasina, the police charged baton and fired three rounds of rubber bullet to disperse the angry mob.

## Joy vows

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caretaker government to remain in power for an indefinite period.

"This government thinks it cannot stay in power for an indefinite period unless it removes her (Hasina) from political arena," he told The Daily Star over telephone from the US where he lives.

Joy termed the case against his mother false and fabricated. "I strongly protest her arrest. Awami League leaders and activists across the world are united, and we will wage a movement and create public opinion to free her. We will contact government of the US as well as of other countries for this."

Asked if they will go for legal actions, Joy said the AL will surely take to legal fight. He however expressed doubts about its success saying, "There is no rule of law in Bangladesh now. There are many extortionists there but the government is not arresting them."

He mentioned that he had talks with her mother before her arrest. "I told her my grandfather (Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman) was also arrested by the then Pakistani regime but it could do no any harm to him."

Recalling the historic speech of Bangabandhu on March 7 in 1971, Joy said, "Our movement now is for building Bangladesh and establishing democracy there. Sheikh Hasina is the only person now who can take the lead in it."

Asked what he will do while her mother is in politics, he said he will do whatever is needed for the country.

"I have not decided yet," Joy said when asked if he will come to Bangladesh.

**REHANA**  
Rehana said any conspiracy against Hasina would not succeed and she would return to the people.

The case filed against her sister is false and the way the Father of the Nation's daughter was arrested was humiliating, Rehana said from the US when contacted over telephone yesterday.

Rehana, now in the US to stay with Hasina's daughter Sayma Wazed Putul who gave birth to a baby a few days back, said, "Bangladesh will never be like Pakistan... This is Bangladesh of Joy Bangla."

Putul is very worried over the arrest of her mother and has become sick, she said.

"The people are with us... They (government) cannot suppress us just as (Pakistani) military rulers could not suppress the Father of the Nation ... Agorola conspiracy case (against him) is an example, " Rehana said.

Terming Hasina a patriotic leader, she also said, "We have left the matter to the people and almighty Allah. And she (Hasina) will return to the people by foiling all conspiracies."

"Bangabandhu sacrificed his life for the nation. He did not bow down even facing threats of being hanged. So, this is usual that his daughter will also speak for the people," Rehana said, regretting that they are facing problems in independent Bangladesh.

"On the one hand, they (government) are talking of recognising Bangabandhu as Father of the Nation and on the other hand, they arrest his daughter."

She went on, "They (security personnel) have ransacked the house (Hasina's residence Sudhasadan)...What were they looking for? ...We have come to know that they searched for money."

They tried to destroy Bangabandhu's family in 1975 and efforts are on again to do the same, Rehana alleged. "How much more we have to suffer as daughters of the Father of the Nation, which is our greatest identity. Our family faced the same fate in 1971. But shall we face that even now?" she questioned.

Asked about the allegations against Hasina, she said the government started behaving with her differently when she started speaking for rights of the people.

"They (government) should prove in a transparent process, if they can, that the allegations brought against her are true " she threw a challenge.

Demanding elections and people rights, as her sister did, cannot and should not be the reasons for one's arrest. Such actions are beyond imagination in other civilised and democratic countries, she said.

"We will face the case (against Hasina) in court," she said. Her only task now is to get her sister released so that she could work for welfare of the people.

## Tense 8½ hours

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on the front door of Sudha Sadan.

5:07am: The joint forces enter Sudha Sadan.

7:28am: Hasina is brought out of the house and taken into a navy blue Police SUV that starts off towards the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court.

7:50am: Hasina is brought to the CMM Court.

8:20am: Court proceedings start against Hasina.

9:30am to 10:10am: Hasina delivers submission in her defence to the court.

10:15am: Joint forces convoy carrying Hasina leaves CMM and heads for the sub-jail.

10:35am: Hasina is taken into the sub-jail at the Parliament Complex.

# She accuses govt

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elections. But no one in the country will believe that I committed extortion," a confident Hasina stated in her submissions to the court, which rejected her bail petition in the extortion case and ordered sending her into jail custody.

"Neither myself, nor my family were ever involved in any sort of corruption or extortion. I have not done anything wrong, let alone commit extortion. I am completely innocent, and I want justice from the court," Hasina pleaded before the court of Metropolitan Magistrate Kamrunnahar.

"I don't know what verdict you will give. Maybe the verdict has been fixed beforehand. If there is no democracy, there cannot be the rule of law," she told the court, adding, "I know you [magistrate] will not be able to give any orders beyond those from the higher authorities."

Referring to the military takeover in 1975 and the High Court judgment that declared the takeover as illegal, Hasina, the eldest daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, said, "To satisfy political ambition of individuals, similar tactics are being adopted now."

"I think attempts are now being made to destroy political forces one after another and bring some other forces to power. The people's fate is being played with, but the people always take the right decision."

"Some people have been coaxed into splitting political parties. The greed and ambition to go to power or to become president by certain quarters is pushing the country towards ruination and destroying democracy," she said.

"Have they not committed corruption?" the AL chief posed a question.

Urging the people to be 'patient', she said, "If I survive and when the time comes, I will stand by you again." People's fate will not change without free and fair elections, and if it is held right now, the AL would get 80 per cent of the vote, she said.

"My fault is that I speak for the people, their plights due to price rise of essentials and their voting rights," Hasina said.

The present caretaker government is an outcome of the movement of the AL-led grand alliance, who were expecting this government to hold 'free, fair and credible elections', but even after six months in power they have not done anything in this regard, not even the voter list.

"I am not an offender, I am not an extortionist. My family and political ideology did not teach me to commit extortion but to serve people's cause," Hasina said, adding, "My father devoted his life for the welfare

of people, and me also."

"I have lived all my life with honesty. My daughter-in-law was sick, my daughter gave birth to a baby, but I was not allowed to go to the US to see them."

Terming the cases of extortion and murder 'false' and 'fabricated', Hasina claimed that she was arrested although there was no charge sheet and warrant of arrest.

"If I were a thief, corrupt and murderer, I would not have returned home from abroad."

"There is difference between subscription for party and extortion. A political party is run with donations from its well-wishers."

She also raised questions about motives behind the extortion case against her after 7-8 years of the claimed corruption.

The AL chief told the court that the previous BNP-Jamaat-led coalition government had also tried to implicate her in corruption cases by filing cases concerning purchase of Mig-29 and a frigate, but failed.

Referring to the AL's two times rule since the independence of Bangladesh, she said whenever the AL came to power, it devoted all its efforts to the welfare of the people and the nation.

About her five-year rule from 1996, the former prime minister said the country saw remarkable achievements in terms of economic growth, food surplus, stable prices of essentials, and electricity production.

She also mentioned the signing of the CHT peace treaty, the Ganges water-sharing accord and recognition of 21st February as International Mother Language Day.

"I have been involved in politics since my student days. I was a VP [vice-president] of Badrunessa College Students Union. I have always spoken for the people."

"Ten universities from around the world have conferred on me doctorate degrees and other awards. Those are not mine, rather those are the prestige of the country. Had I committed corruption they would not have given me awards and doctorate degrees."

"When the Awami League was in power we modernised the army, BDR, police and worked for independence of the judiciary. We gave the High Court financial independence," she said.

## Dr Wazed

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worse hearing the news of arrest of Sheikh Hasina, he said.

The physicians are cautious and are not saying anything on the Hasina issue to Wazed to help reduce his mental stress, Dr Sohrabuzzaman said adding that he would be sent home considering his mental, physical and familial situation.

Awami League chief Hasina, also a former prime minister, was arrested from her Sudha Sadan residence at Dhanmondi yesterday morning in an extortion case and sent to a specially designated prison in the parliament-building complex.

## Dinkal tax case

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Mosharraf Hossain were not served and returned. Eleven people are accused in the case.

The court also directed the authorities concerned to submit reports by August 26 regarding the death of two accused--barrister Abdus Salam Talukder and Nurul Amin Talukder.

The accused who appeared in court through lawyers are Tarique's business partner Giasuddin Al Mamun, Sheikh Razzak Ali, barrister Nazmul Huda, Maj (retd) MA Mannan, Manjurul Ahsan Munshi and Rokonuddin Molla.

Of them, Tarique, Mamun, Huda, Manjurul, Lobi and Mosharraf were arrested earlier and they are now in different jails.

The same court on June 12 issued summons upon Khaleda, her elder son Tarique and nine directors of the daily after Abdul Mannan, deputy registrar (current charge) of the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms (RJSCF), filed the case.

The case was filed against them with the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate under section 36 (5) of the Companies Act 1994. The court had issued summons upon them asking them to appear before the court yesterday in person.

According to the complainant, the accused were directors of Daily Dinkal Publications Ltd, registered with the RJSCF, and did not submit its income tax returns for several years.

There were rumours on Sunday night that BNP chairperson might be arrested or she might be sent to jail if she is produced before the court. According to sources in the BNP, movement of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is restricted since March 7, the day her son Tarique Rahman was arrested. Recently the authorities did not even allow her to visit ailing music icon Sabina Yasmin at Labaid hospital in the capital.

## 5 killed

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luggage from the box of the tilted bus, another Chittagong-bound bus, while taking a turn at the same point, skidded off the road and ran over the passengers, killing five people on the spot and injuring three critically.

The dead were identified as Renet Gomez, 45, Kazi SM Jahangir, 50, and his daughter Kazi Samia Arefin, 15, Jiaul Huq, 40, and Nazrul Islam, 35.

The injured--Islam Jahangir, son of SM Jahangir, Mozammel Huq and pedestrian Bibi Halima--were admitted to Mastannagar Hospital in Mirsarai upazila.

The bodies were sent to Chittagong Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

## Her statement

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me, you carry on the struggle for realising the rights of the people of Bangladesh. Victory of the people is a must," said the former prime minister in her own hand-written statement.

"I have struggled for realisation of people's democratic rights and economic freedom. I never committed any wrongdoing in my life," Hasina said.

Nevertheless, she regretted, "false" cases have been filed against her. "I keep my trust in Allah and the people of this country."

## Urge US, UK, India

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adding, "We are following all cases to see if they meet international standards of due process."

In an instant reaction, the British High Commission in Dhaka said, "We are aware that former prime minister Sheikh Hasina has been arrested. We call upon the caretaker government to ensure that due process is followed and the rule of law upheld."

About Hasina's arrest, a spokesman of the German Embassy in Dhaka said, "No comment because this is an internal, legal and domestic matter of Bangladesh."

Our correspondent from New Delhi reports: Against the backdrop of former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's arrest on extortion charges, India yesterday underlined that "basic individual rights" should be fully respected in such high profile cases and there should be "no violation" of due legal processes.

India also emphasised the need for early restoration of democracy in Bangladesh and hoped people of that country would be able to participate in a "process leading to free, fair, credible and democratic" elections.

"We are closely monitoring internal developments in Bangladesh including arrest of high profile politicians," External Affairs Ministry spokesman Navtej Sarna told reporters here hours after Hasina was arrested in Dhaka and sent to jail.

"In all such cases, it must be ensured that there is no violation of due process as established by law and that individual and basic rights are fully respected," he added.

"As a close and friendly neighbour, India would like to see a peaceful, stable and liberal Bangladesh," Sarna said.

Favouring early restoration of democracy in Bangladesh, the spokesman said India notes the roadmap announced by Bangladesh Election Commission with regard to the polls to be held between October and December 2008.

# This is no way

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think by arresting Sheikh Hasina on charges that can easily be tried without her internment, the government has put at risk all its achievements of the last six months. To us Sheikh Hasina's arrest is totally misconceived and smacks of arrogant use of power without due process of law. To say that nobody is above the law must also mean that law is not the handmaiden of anybody either.

Examine the arbitrariness with which Sheikh Hasina's has been treated. She was allowed to go abroad and just because she spoke out against some actions of this government, (having earlier promised to ratify everything) suddenly several cases were filed against her. Then, when every government would want an accused to return to the country to face the charges, the government decided that she would not be allowed to come. Why and under what law and whose authority, we still don't know. In a most childish move all foreign airlines were asked not to take her on board, ignoring specific international laws that govern international travel. Then, just as suddenly she was allowed to return to a tumultuous welcome at the airport, which then resulted in cases against 5,000 unidentified attendees. (How these cases will be pursued only God knows).

Things were quiet for a while as the AL chief kept mum. She was allowed some movement but stopped whenever she would make a comment. In the latest instances of arbitrariness, Sheikh Hasina was allowed to visit the ailing Sabina Yasmin but Khaleda Zia was not.

In Khaleda Zia's case a comedy was enacted with her going abroad. The plan was to send her into exile and the bargaining was whether or not she will be allowed to take her two sons with her. We saw the drama of Koko--being charged with extortion (same as Sheikh Hasina), arrested and then released within a day with the case still pending. The drama continued for days which later turned out to be a farce as the BNP chief did not even have a visa for any country willing to host her. She had to negotiate to visit her husband's grave and seek clearance every time she went anywhere. Again the question is why, and under what law her movements are curtailed.

We trust the chief of staff when he says that the Army is not involved in politics or forming any new party. But what do we do when we receive reports from our correspondents that district administrators are making lists of so-called clean politicians and that many of them are being visited by the powers that be goading them to join the new so-called king's party? What do we do when senior leaders of both the BNP and the AL tell us of powerful visitors asking them to move against their party leaders or face corruption charges?

We would like to strongly suggest that this is no way to strengthen democracy. Just as 'command economy' failed so will 'command politics'. The core of democracy is people's right to choose their leaders and those who will represent them in the government. We accept that we made some bad choices in the past. We accept that our leaders, including Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia, betrayed our trust in many cases and over many years. We also agree that we got tired and fed up with confrontational and destructive politics and that we all yearned for a change. But we never agreed to bargain our democracy for 'knights in shining armour' to save us from dire straits.

We repeat that we welcomed the emergency for the simple reason that the election that was looming before us was going to further destroy our democracy, which had been battered by years of partisan politics from both sides. We supported the caretaker government, and we still do, simply because we want to go back to democracy, albeit greatly strengthened and made free of corruption. But arresting leaders at whim and 'punishing' them for making critical comments is no way of doing that.

In reference to the economy our Nobel Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus had told an earlier government: "We do not need your help, just remove the obstacles and let people do the rest." We say the same thing today about politics to the caretaker government and to the armed forces that is helping them. We don't need your help in doing politics. Just remove the obstacles and let people do the rest. Here obstacles means corruption, lack of appropriate laws, necessary oversight mechanism, independent judiciary, Election Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission, Public Service Commission, depoliticised bureaucracy and law enforcement agencies.

Much of the above the government is doing, and creditably so. But the tragedy is that it is doing something more. It is attempting to manipulate our politics by trying to predetermine who will be and who will not be a part of its future. This is neither desirable nor doable and even if forced, not sustainable. Every leader possessing slightest bit of integrity will shy away from being a part of this process. Those who will be forced to participate in this process will lack credibility to command any respect and thus be unable to provide stability. And those who will volunteer to be a part of this process, and there will be many as there has been in the past, will not be worth the paper their names will be written on.

If anybody expects to bring about a dynamic Bangladesh through such group of opportunists can only be termed as being totally devoid of any knowledge of history, especially of this part of the world, and specifically of Bangladesh.

The chief election commissioner's roadmap of Sunday had cleared the air considerably about the coming elections. But yesterday's arrest of Sheikh Hasina brought in some dark clouds over the election horizon. Suspicion has been sown that though the process and mechanics of the coming election may be free and fair, through "command politics" those participating in it may be pre-selected and thereby predetermining the outcome. Simply put "command politics" will yield "command victors" and thus instead of elected government we'll have a puppet government.

We hope that the above nightmarish scenario will not happen. For us to believe that it is imperative that immediate and credible steps be taken to remove all suspicion about it. For a start we think Sheikh Hasina should be set free. Let all credible cases be brought against her and let her face the law and the courts and let the people judge her for what she is. Further we need lifting of ban on indoor politics. This will allow the reformists and the old guards to fight in the open and give the public a chance to understand the issues and make their judgment. It is our firm belief that there is a groundswell of support for reforms in every aspect of our politics. The leaders who will oppose reforms will be rejected by the voters, if not by the party activists and supporters. But the reform process has to be open and free, and not manipulated.

We conclude by urging the army-backed caretaker government not to jeopardise the whole reform process and the considerable success that this government has achieved in fighting corruption and bringing some institutional reforms by witting or unwittingly becoming over-ambitious and taking more on their plate than they can digest. The fundamental mistake committed by past proponents of "command politics" was to underestimate the wisdom of our masses. We cannot afford a repeat of that mistake.

## BCL calls

### student

## Strike today

## though banned

### DU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the student wing of Awami League (AL), has called a strike at all educational institutions of the country today protesting the arrest of Sheikh Hasina although enforcing any strike is banned during the state of emergency.

In a press release signed by BCL Office Secretary Nasim Al Momin Rupok yesterday, BCL President Mahmud Hasan Ripon and Acting General Secretary Shahinur Rahman Tutul demanded immediate release of the former prime minister.

### JUBO LEAGUE

AL's youth front Jubo League will stage demonstrations across the country today protesting the arrest of Awami League President Sheikh Hasina.

Jubo League Chairman Jahangir Kabir Nanak and General Secretary Mirza Azam in a joint statement yesterday demanded release of their leader within 72 hours. Otherwise, they threatened to announce a greater agitation programme.

They apprehended that the democratic and secular politics of the country would be at stake following her arrest in a "false" case.

## Twin car bombings

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bombs, happen daily.

A string of attacks Monday morning in the capital killed at least 14 people.

In the deadliest, a roadside bomb exploded as an Iraqi army patrol passed in the city's northeast outskirts, killing five soldiers and wounding nine, an army officer said.

Two car bombs struck, one driven by a suicide bomber who struck a police checkpoint on a major road leading to a major Interior Ministry building inside the Green Zone. Two policemen were killed and seven people wounded, a police official said.

A parked car bomb went off in the central district of Karradah on Monday, exploding near Masbah Square, killing one person, wounding three others and leaving nearby shops burned, a police official said. On Sunday, a car bomb went off about a half-mile away, killing 10 people.