



COMPLIMENTARY

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Protests pour in over arrest of Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different organisations and eminent personalities yesterday strongly criticised the arrest of Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina, terming it unwanted and unjust, and demanded her immediate release.

Expressing deep resentment over the government's move they said if there were any evidence of criminal activities against Hasina, she should be tried under conventional laws.

Nirmol Sen, general secretary of Samik Krishak Samajbadi Dal (SKSD) in a statement said, "Arrest of Hasina is not part of the government's efforts to curb corruption, it has a political agenda."

Deputy Publicity Secretary of Dhaka City AL Nayem Moman in his statement said, "Arrest of Hasina in a false case has put democracy of the country and the role of the caretaker government under question."

Ektorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmol Committee, South Asian Peoples Union Against Fundamentalism and Communalism in a joint statement said, "If there was any evidence of criminal activities against Sheikh Hasina, she could be tried under conventional laws." Prof

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Hasina, Khaleda given 7 days for wealth report

ACC serves notices

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday served notices on former prime ministers Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina to submit their wealth statements as part of



its initiative to find out whether there is any ground for filing graft cases against the two.

In the notices, the government anti-graft watchdog asked the chiefs of BNP and Awami League (AL) to submit statements of their movable and immovable proper-

ties to the commission within seven working days from the date of the notification.

AL President Sheikh Hasina, who had been arrested on Monday and sent to a sub-jail, was served with the notice through the jail authorities while the notice to Khaleda was sent to her Mainul Road residence in Dhaka Cantonment.

Talking to reporters on the ACC premises, its Secretary Mokhees Ur Rahman said the decision was taken yesterday morning. "This is a routine work of the commission," the secretary added.

On receiving the two most prominent leaders' wealth statements, the ACC will crosscheck the statements with the information gathered by itself with assistance from intelligence agencies.

"The ACC will file cases against them, if they are found to be suppressing information about their wealth in the statements," a source in the ACC said.

Sources in intelligence agencies said they already have information about the wealth of the two leaders.

The intelligence agencies gathered the information by collecting the two leaders' wealth statements submitted to the Election Commission during filing of their nominations, and from NBR. Besides, they collected informa-



tion about the two leaders' bank accounts and examined whether there were any unusual transactions, the sources said.

All the documents and information collected by the intelligence agencies were sent to the ACC, the

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Hasina takes physiotherapy

Not happy with supplied 4 newspapers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina took physiotherapy in the special jail yesterday as she suffered back pain from the jostling while being taken out of the jam packed court on Monday.

Hasina, who has been kept in the special jail within the parliament complex, also received a cut on one of her fingers in the melee, sources in the intelligence agencies told The Daily Star.

They said the blood pressure of the AL chief went high on Monday night and that her family supplied the medicines yesterday.

Hasina's special personal aide Dr Hasan Mahmud told journalists that Hasina's physiotherapist Lutfa Ali yesterday visited her at the special jail to give her therapy.

"We had appealed to the authorities to permit the physiotherapists who used to give Sheikh Hasina therapy," Hasan said.

DIG Prisons Major Shamsul Haider Siddiqui, meanwhile, told The Daily Star that Hasina is physically well and passing her days by reciting the Quran, offering prayers, reading books and

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AL faces leadership crisis again after 26 years

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL) braces itself for a leadership crisis again after 26 years as the party's deeply divided big guns vie to establish supremacy in absence of Sheikh Hasina, now detained on extortion charges.

The mid- and grassroots level leaders seem uncertain whether the organisation would be able to come through the difficult situation like it did oftentimes in over two decades under the leadership of Hasina. The wrangling among the senior leaders over reforms in the party leaves it to a more vulnerable position.

Apparently uplifted and encouraged by the arrest, the so-called star group led by president member Amir Hossain Amu plans to push harder for a greater sway. On the other hand, the pro-Hasina leaders and workers are resolved to keep the AL united while trying to have their leader free.

Besides, there are some mid-level leaders who want reforms but are against the star group's taking control of the party.

None of the pro-reform camp has condemned Hasina's arrest.

They even opted not to take part in an informal meeting called by acting AL president Zillur Rahman to discuss what to do in response to the situation.

AL President Member Abdur Razzak, one of those campaigning for reforms, has publicly questioned Hasina's decision to assign Zillur Rahman to deputise for her.

Of the senior leaders and presidium members, only Motia Chowdhury along with some others yesterday visited Zillur's residence and discussed with him what should be their next course of action.

Things following the high-profile detention do not augur well for the party. They indicate that the country's largest political organisation might face a split if the AL chief is kept away for a long time. A potential break-up of the AL will naturally have implications for its front organisations too as both the groups have their followers in those.

The pro-reform group that includes among others Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed and Suranjit Sengupta has been working towards intra-party reforms with the blessing of the

authorities, say insiders.

Political observers believe it will be much easier for them to bring about the changes they want in absence of Hasina. It would be an uphill task for them to carry out radical reforms in the AL while she's around.

A number of senior leaders including the general secretary who once were known to be close to Hasina have been detained.

Against this backdrop, acting president Zillur yesterday urged all leaders, workers and supporters to remain united and not to do anything at whim.

"Please be patient. You will have to unite to forge a movement in future," he added.

Hasina was elected AL president in absentia in 1981 in similar circumstances. Hasina returned home ending years of exile and took command of the party that was in a mess due to infighting over the leadership.

Since then, she was put under house arrests on many occasions during the movement against military rule and each time the AL leaders and workers took to streets agitating for her release.

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CEC plays down AL chief's arrest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda yesterday said the arrest of Awami League President Sheikh Hasina should not hinder putting the election roadmap in place.

"But it will have a negative impact on the political arena," he said.

The CEC made the comments while talking to reporters yesterday evening.

He also said the Election Commission (EC) should work at its own pace because it has no connection with politics.

Regarding the forthcoming views-exchange meetings with

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UK asks govt to ensure every assistance to Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury yesterday said London has asked Dhaka to ensure that 'every assistance' is given to detained Awami League (AL) chief Sheikh Hasina within the legal process and that the process is not violated to protect anyone's interests.

"We have asked the caretaker

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AL activist dies hearing Hasina held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

An Awami League activist died of heart attack in Nasti village in Maheshpur on Monday morning hearing the news of party chief Sheikh Hasina's arrest by the joint forces.

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

An elderly person reads about the arrest of Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina in a newspaper pasted on a wall at Paltan in the capital as most dailies had the incident as their lead news yesterday.

It all started with extension of judges' retirement age

STAR REPORT

Widespread negative reaction to the arrest of Awami League (AL) chief and former prime minister Sheikh Hasina indicates deepening of the political crisis that has been plaguing the country for almost a year now, according to political analysts.

Yet only a few months ago it seemed that the country was moving away from the path of confrontation, the seed of which had been distinctly sown on May 16, 2004 when the BNP-Jamaat-led alliance government had amended the constitution to extend the retire-

ment age for judges to 67 years from 65.

The main opposition party Awami League was already suspicious of the way the alliance government was politicising all institutions of the country in an effort to ensure its perpetual stay in power.

The May 2004 amendment solidified AL's belief that BNP was conspiring to appoint a retired chief justice as the chief of the caretaker government before the next election, who was quite well known as a BNP loyalist.

From then on AL kept on saying that it would not accept retired

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Anxious wait in SL for Buddha's sacred hair

REZAUL KARIM

People of Sri Lanka are now eagerly waiting to receive Lord Buddha's sacred hair relic which is to be taken to Colombo from Bangladesh tomorrow (Thursday) by a high-powered ministerial delegation led by Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama. The relic is to be handed over to the Sri Lankan delegation today (Wednesday).

According to the officials of Sri Lankan High Commission in Dhaka, elaborate programmes have been taken up to receive the sacred relic. Sri Lankan Prime Minister Rathnasiri Wickramanayaka will receive the relic on the tarmac of Bandaranaike International Airport tomorrow.

The sacred relic is being given to Madampe Senanayake Aramaya by the ancient monastery of Chittagong Buddhist Viharaya on

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Talks next month to restore air, sea links

Dhaka, Colombo decide at bilateral talks



PHOTO: PD

Visiting Sri Lankan delegation led by Lankan Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama calls on Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed at his office yesterday.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka and Colombo decided to meet as early as the next month to re-establish direct air and sea links, with Sri Lanka eyeing greater pharmaceuticals, cement, leather goods and food commodities import from Bangladesh.

The decision was made during bilateral talks between the two countries, led by visiting Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama, and Bangladesh Foreign Adviser Iftekhar A Chowdhury, where they also committed themselves to increasing the paltly \$39 million bilateral trade.

The visiting Sri Lankan delegation, which includes two other

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Sircar might have to refund money

Says Akbar Ali on Tk 28 lakh medical bill

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar might have to refund around Tk 28 lakh that he had drawn as medical bill giving an undertaking unless

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BNP reformists wait on Khaleda's fate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The pro-reform leaders of BNP are now observing the political situation and waiting to see what steps the government takes regarding BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

These leaders are planning to hold the party council within August excluding Khaleda as they think that the arrest of the party chief, who is almost "confined" to her cantonment residence, is now a matter of time.

They now also believe that they will be able to take a decision about implementing the reforms after deciding about Khaleda since the arrest of Awami League President Sheikh Hasina has changed the situation.

The leaders, however, refused to

make any comment on Hasina's arrest.

"The situation is not good for politicians...Each and everyone—whether a reformist or anti-reformist, honest or dishonest—is now panicked," a former lawmaker in the league of the BNP reformists told The Daily Star.

Most of these pro-reform BNP leaders, who have been regular at the residence of party Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, were not seen there yesterday.

Sources close to Bhuiyan, who is playing the key role to bring changes in the party constitution keeping the party chairperson aside, said the pro-reform leaders will announce the date for holding the party council if Khaleda is arrested soon.

"It will be tough to hold the council in the presence of the chairperson as she has already opposed holding of the council amid the state of emergency," a BNP leader yesterday told The Daily Star.

Sources said the pro-reform leaders are maintaining close contact with the district level leaders and have advised them to convince party workers in favour of holding the council as soon as possible.

Sarder Sakawat Hossain Bakul, former lawmaker close to Bhuiyan, told The Daily Star that they want to hold the council within August. "We sent the reform proposals to our councillors at the district and upazila levels and we are getting

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Student strike partly observed

DU CORRESPONDENT

A daylong countrywide student strike enforced by the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) was partly observed yesterday.

The BCL, student wing of Awami League, called the strike at all educational institutions to protest the arrest of Hasina though enforcement of strike is banned in the state of emergency.

Three crude bombs exploded on the Dhaka University (DU) campus in the morning creating panic among the teachers and students of the university and the children of an adjacent school. The bombing caused no casualties.

Witnesses said the bombs went off with a big bang producing smoke behind the vice-chancellor's office at the Registrar Building at around 11:30am.

Police suspected that those who called the strike might have carried

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