

Bangladeshi cops

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including Bangladesh have an opportunity to contribute more by sending a large number of police personnel.

Bangladesh has sent its first police contingent in Ivory Coast in 2005 to work under the UN mission. Now two contingents each having 125 personnel are working there. The contingents include 10 officers and two doctors.

Two more police contingents are also working in Congo and one in East Timor, while preparations to dispatch another to Sudan are underway, said a police official.

Working with the forces from different countries is expanding experiences of Bangladesh Police in many ways, a police official told The Daily Star correspondent during the visit to Ivory Coast in mid-July.

Inspector General of Police Nur Mohammad, who visited Bangladeshi peacekeepers in Ivory Coast and Liberia last month, told The Daily Star yesterday that the exposure to UN missions has been benefiting the policemen beyond expectation.

"It's a wonderful opportunity to work with foreign police personnel, which is enriching our force to the great extent," said the IGP, adding that the policemen will get a good opportunity to apply their knowledge in mission once they return.

Though 125 police personnel have been working in each Bangladeshi FPU in Ivory Coast, the work force is not strong enough to perform assigned duties properly.

This reality prompted them to place a proposal to the authorities concerned to increase the number to 140 in each BANFPU to perform their duties properly, said a police official.

Of the two contingents, BANFPU-1 has been deployed in Bouake city under Commander Md Akram Hossain and BANFPU-2 in Yamoussoukro, administrative capital of Ivory Coast, where Ruhul Amin is its commander.

A civil war in Ivory Coast broke out on September 19, 2002. Although most of the fighting ended by late 2004, the country remains split in two, the North under rebel control and the South under the government.

French troops had been brought into the country to resolve the crisis. The UN operation in Ivory Coast began after the civil war calmed down. A peace agreement to end the conflict was signed in March this year that is known as "Ouagadougou Peace Agreement", which could lead to the holding of elections and reunification of the country.

Both units of Bangladesh Police have already been acquainted with the people of Yamoussoukro and

Bouake.

The police peacekeepers are also performing significant duties including patrolling, riot controlling, escorting of the VVIPs, VIPs and refugees, guarding key point installations and important UN establishments, setting up check points, check posts and out posts, forming convoy with armed personnel carriers, arresting hard-nut criminals, detaining wrongdoers, and evacuating and searching houses and buildings.

Few months back, a massive fire broke out at the market place of Yamoussoukro. On information, two platoons of BANFPU-2 rushed there with water canons and firefighting equipment. With the help of the locals and the authorities they controlled the situation. This proactive enterprise is one of the remarkable jobs done by Bangladeshi police peacekeepers.

Up to now Bangladesh has completed 24 out of total 61 peace-keeping missions, where 62 thousand 131 peacekeepers have taken part.

Currently, over 83 thousand troops are working in peacekeeping operations in 15 countries, with about ten thousand peacekeepers from Bangladesh in 11 different UNPKOs. Bangladesh is one of the top listed troops contributing countries in the UNPKO.

Bangladeshi peacekeepers had been operating in many of the beleaguered areas of the world under difficult circumstances, even in serious life risks.

To restore peace and earn name and fame for the country, 76 Bangladeshi peacekeepers have so far laid down their lives for the cause of world peace. Among them, four police officers embraced death in foreignlands.

Mass hysteria

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Immediately after she fell unconscious, seven more girls followed, said Headmistress Mohsena Khatun.

The children went back home with their parents after a medical team led by Dr Parikkhit Par and Civil Surgeon Dr Narayan Prasad Chowdhury had treated them.

Meanwhile, 10 class nine students of Pabna Dubla Fazilatunnesa Girls' High School went unconscious at about 11:00am yesterday, reports our Pabna correspondent.

A student became senseless and while trying to help her, the others also fainted.

Two female students of Haider Ali High School at Mugda of Sabujbagh in the capital were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital with the symptoms of mass hysteria.

Matin plays down

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He is accused of abusing his position as a lawmaker to grab 25 bighas of land and shrimp farms, and of amassing massive wealth.

Nazrul is also reportedly guilty of embezzling Tk 1.68 crore by creating a 'ghost' test relief programme. Three other extortion cases against Nazrul are currently underway.

Mowlana Abdus Sobhan, former lawmaker of Jamaat from Pabna, is accused in a case of misappropriating relief goods, after 160 sheets of corrugated iron sheets were recovered from his clinic in Pabna on June 27.

Former Jamaat lawmaker from Nilphamari, Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, surrendered himself on February 19 and was later sent to jail for embezzling 239 corrugated iron sheets which had been marked as relief material.

Former Jamaat lawmaker, Shajahan Chowdhury, has been accused in 24 cases since 2001, including murder, and was named by the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) on the February 18 list of corruption suspects. The joint forces raided his house on February 3 on suspicion of corruption.

But he walked out in front of law enforcement officials after submitting his wealth statement on February 20. Three extortion cases were filed against Shajahan in the last two months. He is currently in hiding.

He was acquitted in three murder cases while Jamaat was part of the four-party alliance government.

Former Jamaat lawmaker from Khulna-5, Golam Parwar, is accused of driving a jute mill to bankruptcy between 2002 and 2004. A case was filed on June 27 with Khanjahan Ali police station by the mill manager accusing Parwar of bankrupting the mill by looting Tk 35 lakh worth of goods and leaving the mill with a Tk 2 crore electricity bill.

On February 20, five bundles of corrugated iron sheets were recovered from a madrasa patronized by former Gaibandha-1 Jamaat lawmaker, Mowlana Abdul Aziz. No case has been filed against Aziz as yet.

London seminar

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Secretariat, Liberation, Saferworld, Ahmadiyya Muslim Association, International Crisis Group, Jago Bangladesh, London School of Economics, and University of London addressed the seminar.

Addressing the seminar British MPs expressed concern at the 'undignified arrest' of former Bangladesh prime minister and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, and the rejection of her application for bail. It was also suggested that a delegation of parliamentarians should visit Bangladesh to observe the situation.

Speakers were also critical about the restrictions on the freedom of political parties to decide freely on how to democratise themselves. They suggested lifting the ban on political activities before the next general elections.

The seminar criticised the detention of a large number of people and lack of prosecutorial and judicial capacity to hold the trials promptly.

In his inaugural speech, Lord Avebury said while attention has rightly been focused on the caretaker government's strategy for genuinely free and fair elections, reformation of the political system, and eradication of corruption, there is concern also about problems of human rights.

He said establishment of a national human rights commission, as promised by the government, is a priority.

Ashraf Uddin, acting high commissioner of Bangladesh, gave a comprehensive presentation on the caretaker government's commitment to minority and human rights in its reform plans.

He said a draft of the law on the Human Rights Commission is about to be circulated to stakeholders for consultation.

Baroness Uddin, chair of All Party Group on Bangladesh, Amnesty International's South Asia Researcher Abbas Faiz, Conservative Friends of Bangladesh Chair Ms Ann Main MP, Labour MP David Drew, Human Rights Watch Asia Director Brad Adams, and European Friends of Bangladesh Chair Dr Charles Tannock MEP also took part in the discussion.

Other contributors included Harry Cohen MP, Tower Hamlets Mayor Councillor (Cllr) Ann Jackson, Awami League Representative MA Rahim, BNP Representative Barrister Jushna Miah, Gano Forum's representative Cllr Ayub Korom Ali, Respect Cllr Luffa Begum, Bangla TV's MS Alam Liton, ex-Cllr Talal Karim and Akik Rahman Chowdhury.

The AL representative said Sheikh Hasina was arrested and imprisoned under the emergency powers that appear to deny her basic legal rights, including legal representation.

Lord Avebury in his concluding remarks said, "We as fellow members of the Commonwealth, and with the ties of family and history that bind us together, want to see Bangladesh go through a new liberation, emerging with strong political, legal and human rights institutions."

Speakers also discussed the 'failure' to bring to justice criminals who committed outrages during the last government's regime, and the need to curb the activities of fanatics who stir up religious hatred.

200 RU teachers

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They also said that the government failed to curb crime as well as the prices of essentials and the people have started to lose faith in the government already.

The teachers believe that the image of the government was tarnished as it mistreated Sheikh Hasina during her arrest when it could have prosecuted her without sending her to jail.

A senior teacher said they felt moral obligations to protest and they came up with this unique technique to place their demands because strikes are not allowed under the emergency rules.

Sedition charges

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Akond, ASP of CID, Faridpur zone, Dhaka, arrested Bahauddin Nasim on February 27, 2002 at Zia International Airport (ZIA) and seized 6,300, three passports, two tickets, eight books and some CDs.

The complainant of the case, filed with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka, alleged that the CDs recovered from Nasim on his way to the USA contained 'false and fabricated scenes of torture' on the minority community.

He further alleged that he watched the incidents of murder, torture and ransacking of rooms at DU dormitories and houses at different parts of the country by the activists of four-party alliance in the videos.

The CDs contained torture of Purnima in Sirajganj, attacks on minority Hindu community after the general election on October 1, last year and ransacking of puja mandaps.

"Such activities might destroy the communal harmony and worsen the country's law and order," he observed.

After hearing, the court had directed the officer in-charge (OC) of Airport Police Station to accept the complaint as a regular case and to go for legal action against the accused.

Following the court order, police registered the case.

More areas inundated

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shelter at nearby highlands and embankments. The newly inundated upazilas are Chowhali, Shahjapur and Belkuchi.

Around 50 more educational institutions including primary schools were forced to close as after being deluged by flash flood.

Water Development Board (WDB) officials said the flood situation may take a serious turn within the next few hours and submerge all nine upazilas of the district, as torrents of water from upstream continues to gush into the low lying areas.

The Brahmaputra embankment near Ranigram point has turned vulnerable again due to the intense currents of the Jamuna. Kunkunia Bridge on the Sirajganj-Kazipur road is also at risk, said officials at Roads and Highways Department (RHD).

Meanwhile, various waterborne diseases including skin disease, diarrhoea and dysentery broke out in the area. Local hospitals have been having difficulties to treat the unexpectedly large number of patients as the hospitals lack adequate supply of saline and medicines, doctors working at the hospitals said.

Our Netrakona correspondent reports, over 50,000 people have been marooned due to flash flood while more areas are likely to be flooded soon as water level of the rivers Sumeshwary, Mogra, Kangsha and Dhanu continue to rise.

The affected upazilas are Durgapur, Kaimakanda, Mohongoni, Khaliajuri and Madan, WDB officials said. Vast areas of Netrakona sadar and Atpara upazilas are likely to go under water in the next 24 hours, they predicted.

Vast areas of Birishiri, Kakoyirgora, Gaokandia and Bakoljura union in Durgapur upazila, Langura, Rangchati, Karnai, Pogla and Kolaiti union in Kaimakanda, Mohongoni, Madan and Khaliajuri are now under floodwater, Sources said.

The floodwaters damaged 80 percent of Aman seedlings, Aman crops and vegetables fields, locals said.

The road communication between the district headquarters and Durgapur upazila sadar and Netrakona and Khaliajuri upazila has been disrupted due to high waters.

Our correspondent from

Khaleda

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ACC Secretary Mokhesur Rahman yesterday informed reporters about the ACC decision.

Asked by newsmen, Khaleda's lawyer Ahmed Aazam Khan said that according to estimates till now, she has wealth worth less than Tk 3 crore.

He also said Khaleda's wealth comprises money received from renting a house, fixed deposits, life insurance and savings from salary and benefits she received during her two terms as prime minister. The wealth was accumulated over a period of 40 years. The estimates are yet to be completed, he added.

She has no wealth, movable or immovable, outside the country, he added.

Meanwhile, detained former premier Sheikh Hasina is supposed to submit her wealth statement by July 29 -- the deadline for this.

The ACC secretary said no petition seeking extension of time on behalf of Hasina was received till yesterday.

If case of any time extension petition by Hasina by July 29, the deadline would be shifted, he added.

On July 18, the ACC asked both the former premiers to submit their wealth statements in a week. According to ACC act, the commission can extend the time limit by seven days if someone applies for it.

Quashing graft case

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Following a sudden move by the attorney general office in May, the High Court decided to start hearing of the petition for quashing the case.

In December 2002, Hasina filed the petition with the HC for quashing the case and the court stayed all proceedings of the case in the lower court that had initiated the trial process earlier in October.

On December 11, 2001, Gulam Mostafa, a director of the now-defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption, filed the case with Ramna Police Station, accusing former state minister for power Prof Rafiqul Islam of misappropriating Tk 17.89 crore during the process of installing the Meghnaghat power plant. But in the charge sheet, Hasina and three others were made accused in the case.

EXTORTION CASE HEARING NOW ON AUG 16

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court yesterday re-fixed August 16 for next hearing on the acceptance of the charge sheet in an extortion case against Awami League (AL) Chief Sheikh Hasina, her sister Sheikh Rehana and their cousin Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim.

The same court on Tuesday fixed August 15 for hearing on the issue.

Metropolitan Magistrate Shamsul Alam in a spontaneous

Gaibandha reports, around 60,000 people have been marooned by flash flood in different char areas of four upazilas.

Three major rivers -- Ghagot, Teesta and Brahmaputra are now flowing above the danger mark, according to WDB officials in the district.

New cracks developed along the Brahmaputra embankment at Baguria in Gideri union while Gaibandha Town Protection Embankment on the river Ghagot turned vulnerable at three points.

"Surging water from the River Ghagot might overflow the embankment," said a WDB official.

Floodwater slipped through the breach of Singra embankment under Fulchari upazila and flooded vast areas of adjacent five unions causing heavy damage to croplands.

The bank of River Brahmaputra is eroding alarmingly and flood situation has been getting worse at Sayedpur, Cirakuthi, Balashi and Ratanpur with water level rising fast. So far, the erosion washed away homesteads of 150 people.

Our Bogra staff correspondent reports, the Jamuna crossed danger level at Kalitala point of Sariakandi and caused damage to flood protection embankment at two different points at Kalitala.

Taliban kill

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South Korean and Afghan officials travelled to the insurgency-hit southern province where the Taliban are holding the hostages in order to lead the frantic efforts to save the hostages.

The Koreans are the biggest group of foreigners to be abducted during the Taliban's nearly six-year insurgency against the government of President Hamid Karzai and international forces in Afghanistan.

Any prisoner exchange would run counter to Karzai's pledge not to allow the practice after his government in March freed five Taliban militants in exchange for an Italian reporter.

A fresh hostage crisis was defused after a few hours when officials said Taliban rebels had freed the unidentified German reporter and his Afghan companion in eastern Afghanistan's Kunar province bordering Pakistan.

The pair were abducted early Wednesday from a house in the far-off district of Watapour where a NATO-led air strike killed several Afghan civilians some two weeks ago, provincial governor Shalizi Didar said.

"They were both freed with the mediation of tribal elders and other influential people. They are safe and sound," Didar told AFP.

The Taliban had earlier claimed responsibility for kidnapping the German journalist.

"They were freed with no conditions through the power and cooperation of peace-loving local elders," Didar said, adding that he was due to meet the German in the provincial capital later Wednesday.

Two other Germans were kidnapped in the south of the country last Wednesday.

The bullet-riddled body of one was dumped by a road on Sunday while the Taliban said the other was seriously ill and slipping in and out of consciousness due to diabetes.

The Taliban have demanded the release of 10 prisoners for the sick German and four other Afghan hostages, but have not set a deadline related to that group of captives.

The Taliban have previously called for South Korea and Germany to pull their troops out of the country but the issue has not figured in their most recent set of demands.

Madhyapara

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to 16 lakh tonnes of the country's demand. The rest of the country's demands are met by importing from neighbouring countries.

If the government and private entrepreneurs use MGMCL rocks only, they would be able to save the country several thousand crore taka every year, the officials claimed.

Quoting a Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology test report, they said the rock of MGMCL is much better in quality than the imported rocks.

The mine is selling rocks in three forms considering national and international demands. The boulders are selling at \$17 per tonne, crushed stone at \$20 while rock-dust is selling at \$15 per tonne. There is, however, an additional 15 percent value added tax (Vat) the customers have to pay. The average extraction cost of rocks is \$11 per tonne.

Bangladesh Railway recently expressed its interest to use MGMCL rocks to build new railway lines and ordered 1,300 tonnes of rock even though their requirement is about 5,000 tonnes.

MGMCL sources said if they cannot sell the rocks in stock shortly, they would be facing a more severe financial crisis and unable to pay for the running cost of the mine. They said they could have trouble paying the wages of 280 Bangladesh workforce and the 63 Korean employees.

They said they are paying each Korean worker \$1,000 monthly, according to the contract they signed, but this is becoming a burden for the mine.

Managing Director of the mine AQM Salim told The Daily Star that marketing initiatives have been taken up to sell the extracted rocks and the MGMCL has a plan to tune rock extraction according to the national consumption.

According to the original project proposal, MGMCL was supposed to extract 1.65 million tonnes (5500 tonnes a day) of granite annually. The project would last 46 years while the reserve is 174 million tonnes.

Storm kills 1

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Comilla deputy commissioner has started assessing the damage and sending relief to the affected people.

Our correspondent from Brahmanbaria reported that at least 15 people were hurt and 100 thatched houses were damaged as a tornado swept over six villages of Ashuganj upazila at about 10:00am. A few hundreds of trees were also uprooted.

The affected villages are Madupur, Pachbhita, Charchartala, Araishida, Bahadurpur and Durgapur.

Of the injured, a few were admitted to the Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital and the others were treated at the local clinics, locals said.

Supply of electricity was snapped at Araishida and Durgapur unions due to the tornado.

Over 300 thatched houses were damaged when a tornado lashed at some nine villages at two upazilas in Jamalpur district yesterday morning, our correspondent from Tangail reports.

The affected villages are Nishindi, Parpara, Naricali, Binoder Para, Goherpara, and Pingalhati at Sadar upazila and Arannagar, Satpoa, and Boladiar at Sarishabari upazila.

The tornado that broke at around 7:00am lasted for only two minutes, sources said.

Around 100 thatched houses at Sadar and other 200 at Sarishabari upazila were damaged in the storm while a large number of trees were uprooted. The power supply of the areas was also disrupted, sources added.

In Sarishabari, two people including Rustam Ali of Satpoa village, were injured and were admitted to Sarishabari Upazila Health Complex.

The tornado damaged 20 structures and left at least 5 people injured at Haziganj of Chandpur. Besides, around 50 houses were damaged and at least 20 people were left injured in the same storm at Ramganj of Laxmipur district.

4 graft suspects

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expenditure for children, Tk 7.50 lakh for election and Tk 2 lakh for purchasing arms.

Rafiqul Islam in his statement said he has two flats at Dhanmondi, 615 decimal lands in Jessore, a monthly saving scheme of Tk 74,476, bank balance of around Tk 2 lakh and Tk 1.30 lakh investment in business.

He also mentioned that he gave Tk 20 lakh loan to his wife.

Rafiqul's wife has a car, saving certificates of Tk 25 lakh, bank balance of over Tk 9 lakh, monthly savings scheme of Tk 77 thousands and Tk 2 lakh investment in business, according to the statement.

Sheikh Abdullah's statement mentioned that he has a flat at Gulshan, 25 acres of land in Gopalganj, Tk 11 lakh furniture in his Gulshan and Gopalganj residences, bank balance of Tk 5 lakh in 12 accounts, share certificates of Tk 62 lakh and bank deposit of Tk 50 lakh.

He also has Tk 31 lakh investment in different businesses, Tk 7 lakh cash in hand, two cars, a truck, a shotgun and a pistol.

The CBA leader Mollah Azad in his statement said he has a flat at Gulshan, 27 acres of land in Kashiyan and an FDR of Tk 1 crore.

Babar faces trial

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the case and summoned the complainant and other witnesses to appear before the court on the scheduled date.

The army-led joint forces recovered four firearms-- a shotgun, a rifle, a pistol, and a Brazilian revolver-- two magazines and 297 bullets during a raid in Babar's Gulshan residence on May 28.

BASHUNDHARA CASE

Judge Mohammad Azizul Haq of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order after Kabiruddin Mollah, deputy tax commissioner of Circle-8, filed the case seeking arrest warrants against them.

The accused are Bashundhara Industrial Complex Limited, Bashundhara Group Chairman Ahmed Akbar Sobhan Shah Alam, its managing director and also Sobhan's wife Afroza Begum, their sons-- directors Sadat Sobhan, Safayet Sobhan and Sayem Sobhan, deputy director Mostafizur Rahman and MM Kuddus, proprietor of Kuddus & Company.

In his order, the judge said the arrest warrants were issued as the charges brought against them were found to be true.

The court fixed July 31 for next hearing of the case and directed the authorities concerned to send the copies of the arrest warrants to the respective police stations for implementing those within the scheduled date.

In his complaint, Kabir mentioned that Shah Alam and others had evaded a total of Tk 8,48,15,746 in income tax during fiscal years 2004 to 2007.

Shah Alam and others repeatedly gave false information to the income tax department about their real income and expenditure and did not show their income tax return.

ALAMGIR CASE

Judge Shahed Noor Uddin of the Third Special Court-- set up at Shere-e-Bangla Nagar MP Hostel-- will deliver today the verdict in presence of the accused.

Rocket attack

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Mehsud, a former Guantanamo Bay prisoner, was believed to be linked to the wave of suicide and other militant attacks that has claimed more than 200 lives since the siege of the capital's Red Mosque began on July 3.

Police said the Bannu attack could be a backlash to the killing of Mehsud.

"Rockets fired in (the) middle of the night randomly show that militants are desperate to cause indiscriminate damage and to embarrass the government," senior local police officer Mahboob Khan told AFP.

"There were no definite targets but the aim was to inflict maximum casualties," he said.

Violence has also surged along Pakistan's northwestern border with Afghanistan after pro-Taliban militants in North Waziristan scrapped a peace agreement with the government.

Suspected militants blew up a security checkpoint, a school and a government office early Wednesday in Miranshah, the main town in North Waziristan, and fired a rocket at an army camp, local officials said.

No casualties were reported in the attacks.

Residents in the town said all government offices and banks were shut down for the second day running due to the security situation, while officials said there was a ban on all traffic in the district between 7pm and 7am.

The ban followed reports that armed militants were moving around in tinted-glass pickup trucks.

Pakistani authorities have been trying to revive the peace deal in North Waziristan, but US President George W. Bush last week criticised it and said that Musharraf had realised it was not working.

Hasina's detention

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immediately," she said in the letter dated July 24.

Expressing concern over delaying in holding of the next parliamentary elections, Clarke urged Rice to initiate a discussion with the chiefs of both the caretaker government and the army to lift the ongoing state of emergency and set a date for elections so the economic, political, and social reforms needed to assist Bangladesh can be instituted.

Clarke said Hasina was arrested one week after she spoke out against attempts by the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence to infiltrate two major political parties and create a new party of leaders who are more inline with the "military government".

Even before Hasina's arrest, the army had already attempted to push her into exile, the US congresswoman said.

She said people have remained in custody without trials, without speaking with an attorney, without being brought before a judge and without being formally charged.

"Under the temporary military government, trials are being conducted by special tribunals with no jury and the proceedings are closed to the public with only a judge present," Clarke said.

The case cites inconsistencies between his wealth statement and the actual wealth.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) found that the accused did not declare in his wealth statement Tk 1.17 crore that he has in fixed deposit accounts.

NASER TO JAIL

Detained former BNP lawmaker M Naser Rahman, son of former finance minister M Saifur Rahman, was sent to jail yesterday on completion of ten-day remand in a graft case.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mizanur Rahman passed the order after the ACC produced the arrestee before the court and prayed for sending him to jail until the investigation is completed.

SARWAR EXTORTION CASE

Barisal City Corporation Mayor Majibor Rahman Sarwar was shown arrested yesterday in a Tk 15 lakh extortion case filed with Gulshan Police Station on July 18.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mir Ali Reza passed the order after Sub-Inspector Aminul Islam, also the investigation officer of the case, submitted a petition to show him arrested in the case.

UNB from Chittagong adds: a court here yesterday rejected the bail petition of detained former BNP lawmaker Sarwar Jamal Nizam.

After hearing, Metropolitan Sessions Judge AKM Anwar Hossain turned down the bail petition of Nizam, now in Chittagong jail on one month's detention given by the Joint Court.

Joint forces arrested Nizam from the Chittagong Club gate on June 22 with three bottles of foreign liquor and five cans of beer.

Jakarta keen

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addition to pharmaceuticals, and Jakarta has shown an interest in both the products.

The two sides also agreed on a more frequent exchange of business delegations and to hold single-country trade fairs to promote each others' products.

Jakarta also showed interest in a raft of other Bangladeshi products that they feel have internationally competitive prices, such as ceramic products, saris, agricultural products, beverages, ready made garments, leather goods, etc.

The foreign adviser said the two countries are also looking into relaxing the existing visa regime to improve people-to-people contact.

The Bangladeshi delegation was headed by Economic Relations Divisions Secretary Mohammad Aminul Islam Bhuiyan.

Iran ready

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Crocker and Tehran's envoy Hassan Kazemi Qomi held a second round of talks on Tuesday in Baghdad over security in Iraq to follow up a first meeting on May 28.

The outcome of the meeting appeared to be very mixed with both sides still at loggerheads over who was to blame for the daily violence in Iraq.

The United States accused Iran at the meeting of stepping up its alleged support of militia groups and Crocker admitted afterwards the encounter had been marked by "heated exchanges".

"We've got a lot of problems with the Iranians and, you know, face to face we're not going to pull any punches," he told Washington-based reporters in a conference call afterwards.

Iraqi officials hailed what they said was the creation of a tripartite security committee. However, US officials were more downbeat, saying Washington would "take a look" at the idea.

Mottaki did not say which diplomats could be involved in any higher-level talks.

Iran has several deputy foreign ministers, the highest ranking being Mehdi Mostafavi. The US deputy Secretary of State is former US ambassador to Iraq John Negroponte.

The first round of talks between Crocker and Kazemi Qomi were the highest-level public talks between the two sides in almost three decades. A meeting between deputy foreign ministers would be seen as a significant breakthrough.

Another car

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Mahmud said that the expatriate AL leaders and workers arranged the money for purchasing these two cars for the former prime minister following recommendation of her security committee.

"As per their recommendations, the cars were arranged," Hasan said adding "It's really mysterious why the car has been seized. I don't find any reason." He, however, said that the taskforce members seized nothing else.

As Sheikh Hasina's previous bullet-proof car was damaged severely during the grenade attack on her on 21 August in 2004 and was abandoned, Hasina's security committee recommended her using such cars for security reasons, he told The Daily Star.

Sources said, the party's former lawmakers Mohammad Sirajul Akbar and Zahid Hasan Russell imported the cars on duty-free quota and presented those to the AL chief.