

Koko & commission

FROM PAGE 1
name of a Malaysia-based company violating both Foreign Exchange Regulation Act and Money Laundering Prevention Act.

Back in February, Khaleida Zia's ex-personal secretary AHM Nurul Islam in an interview with the Bangla daily Prothom Alo said Koko lobbied for Global Agro Trade Private Ltd, which in 2004 received the contract to run the Dhaka ICD for seven years.

"But the tender invited by the Chittagong Port Authority in 2003 mentioned that the contract would be awarded for five years only. Interestingly, this company had no previous experience in this field and did not have the necessary machinery to operate an ICD. I remember the former prime minister's son Arafat Rahman visited her several times to lobby for the company before the purchase committee made its decision. The purchase committee had once rejected the proposal, but through intensive lobbying, the proposal was raised in the purchase committee again and the contract was approved," Nurul Islam said on record.

Between 2001 and 2006, Koko's

business firm Advance Ad secured nearly 80 percent market share of the Tk 150-crore-a-year outdoor advertisement business sector by capturing the most lucrative advertisement spots owned by government agencies in the city. Advance Ad has been closed since January.

All throughout the tenure of the last BNP-led government, the government agencies including Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) did not dare to risk the repercussions and silently catered to Koko's whim.

Due to Koko's flagrant violation of DCC rules and regulations, for instance, not paying spot rental for billboards on time, the DCC earned only Tk 70 lakh in revenue during the years 2004 and 2005 against its target revenue of Tk 30 crore for the period.

Advance Ad did a brisk business when a massive city beautification project was undertaken in the capital in the run-up to the 2005 Saarc Summit. Under the facelift project, Koko's firm bagged numerous billboards, unipoles and neon signs along the VIP road from Zia International Airport to Bangla Motor intersection where many noticeable spots such as Mohakhali

Rail Crossing, Shaheed Jahangir Gate, Bijoy Sarani and Farmgate are located.

A number of outdoor ad firms alleged that Koko pulled rank on the DCC, Roads and Highways and Bangladesh Railway to cancel the advertisement deals with other agencies before the Saarc beautification started in late 2003.

They said the DCC had removed all billboards along the Airport Road only to hand over the spaces to Advance Ad as well as to a few other small advertisement firms.

Advance Ad charges clients as high as Tk 10 lakh per year, disregarding the government rates of Tk 50 per square foot of advertisement on a private property and Tk 150 per square foot ad on a government property.

According to the rates set by Advance Ad, its income from the Airport Road alone should be around Tk 30 crore a year, said an industry insider.

Koko is also reported to have benefited from monopolising advertisements on Bangladesh Television (BTV), the sole state-owned television channel. BTV reportedly bent its rules to allot one

hour of its peak time from 8:30pm to 9:30pm for commercials to Ad Media, an enterprise of Advanced Ad.

Koko also held the chairman post of Development Committee of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB). Furthermore, despite having no prior experience, he was a member of BCB's advisory group. It is alleged that he controlled BCB affairs, including ticket sales for international matches, by pulling the strings from behind.

Sources at the BCB said Koko had used his posts for huge financial gains during the renovation work of Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla Stadium.

Koko is also reported to have been involved in the initiative to prepare machine-readable passports and the management hand-over of Shah Amanat International Airport in Chittagong.



PHOTO: PID

Members of Indian National Defence College pose for photograph with Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed at his office yesterday.

'No quarter provoked students for agitation'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

South Asian People's Union Against Fundamentalism and Communalism (SAPUAF) and Forum for Secular Bangladesh (FSB) yesterday blasted an intelligence report that claimed to have found a conspiracy between some university teachers and Indian officials behind the recent clash between the students and law enforcers.

In an open letter to chief adviser and army chief, Shahriar Kabir, acting president of FSB and general secretary of SAPUAF, said the report is fabricated as well as motivated and therefore unacceptable.

"If I am involved in this conspiracy, action should be taken against me, but if the intelligence report is found wrong and politically motivated, then action should be taken against the authorities concerned," said Shahriar.

He said instead of revealing the inherent causes of the student agitation, the intelligence agency is inventing a conspiracy against the anti-Jamaat teachers involving them with Indian authorities.

"This kind of intelligence report will create obstacle to ongoing investigation of the incident," he added.

Meanwhile at a press briefing at his Nayapaltan residence in the city, Prof Kabir Chowdhury, president of SAPUAF, said no political parties nor any other quarter provoked the students for the agitation.

"Such spontaneous student agitation does not need any provocation," he added.

Asked about the recent comment of detained Prof Anwar Hossain on the recent incident at Dhaka University, Prof Chowdhury said any confession is possible from a detainee through torture.

DU violence

FROM PAGE 16
"The commission would not look outside in conducting the investigation," said Justice Habibur while talking to the journalists at his Circuit House office in the capital.

When he was apprised of the army's account of the DU incidents on the official website of Bangladesh Army, he said he was yet to see the website.

Referring to the violent incidents in other public universities of the country, he said the commission would send letters to Rajshahi, Chittagong and Jahangirnagar university authorities seeking information about the incidents.

"The commission would be eager to know whether they (university authorities) formed any probe commission to investigate the incidents. If formed, the commission would ask them to provide information," he said.

When his attention was drawn to the lawsuit filed against thousands of unidentified people regarding the violent incidents, he said that it was a new phase of the problem.

He also said the commission might require more time to finish its job. The probe commission has been given 15 days to submit its report.

Meanwhile, Mobassher Monem, associate professor of Public Administration Department, Shawkat ur Rahman, acting director of DU Gymnasium, Zalat Uddin, a physical instructor and Jashim Uddin, owner of a restaurant, gave their accounts to the commission yesterday, the commission's fourth working day.

Chehlum



Chehlum of AK Fazlul Huq, former state minister and son of Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Huq, was held at his Baridhara residence in the city yesterday, says a press release.

On the occasion, Qurankhwani and doa mahfil was held at his residence and food was distributed among the destitute.

He died of a cardiac arrest on July 19.

BNP split imminent

FROM PAGE 1
briefing after a series of meetings with party leaders in his Gulshan residence, said, "I firmly reject her decision as it is unusual and because everyone has the right to defend oneself."

About 130 leaders including a few standing committee members, former ministers and lawmakers in a joint statement also rejected the expulsions and termed the decision as 'undemocratic and unconstitutional'.

"Khaleida Zia herself pushed the party towards a rift through the undemocratic decision of expelling the secretary general and the joint secretary general," read the statement, signed by Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman, member of the national standing committee, the highest policy making forum of the party.

Meanwhile, Brig Gen (retd) Hannan Shah, an adviser to the party chairperson, yesterday at a news briefing held in his Mohakhali residence, said, "The chairperson expelled the two leaders according to the party constitution."

"An announcement will come from the detained party chief within the next 72 hours through her lawyers," he said when reporters asked him who will lead the party now in absence of Khaleida Zia. "But there is no provision in the party constitution for appointing an acting chairperson," he added.

On Sunday night, Khaleida talked to a few party leaders including Hannan Shah regarding party affairs and following the discussion she signed the two letters of expulsions and the appointment letter. She made the announcement when a judge ordered her to be sent to a sub-jail.

Later, after a meeting with the newly appointed Secretary General Khadaker Delwar and lawyers, Hannan Shah read out the letters of expulsions and the appointment letter to journalists.

BHUIYAN'S STATEMENT

BNP's coalition partners mum

FROM PAGE 1
ask around and hopefully I will be able to talk on this issue the day after tomorrow," Mujahid told The Daily Star.

Senior assistant secretary general of Jamaat, Muhammad Kamaruzzaman, did not make any comment and advised this correspondent to talk to the party's secretary general, Mujahid.

Islami Oikya Jote Chairman Fazlul Haque Amini declined to comment on Khaleida's arrest. While speaking with The Daily Star, he said, "I do not want to talk in this connection and I will not comment on this issue."

When asked, Bangladesh Jatiya Party Chairman Nazim Rahman Manzur said, "Nobody is above the law and Khaleida was arrested on specific graft charge," adding, "...it's quite natural...if there's any specific charge against anybody, he or she has to be tried."

Jatiya Party (Ershad) Chairman

Mannan Bhuiyan at a press briefing categorically termed the expulsions as 'undemocratic and unacceptable.'

"The announcement of the expulsions is undemocratic, unacceptable and against the party constitution. I am firmly rejecting the announcement," he said in a written statement.

He said, "The image of the party has been tarnished before the historic 1/11...we took necessary initiatives to restore it. Honest and dedicated party leaders and in fact all the people of the country supported the move."

"The regrettable divisive steps taken by the party chief at a time when the party is facing a crisis is making us anxious because the party unity should have been maintained at any cost," he said, adding that the expulsions are merely an expression of a divisive plot.

He urged all members to sincerely implement the reform initiatives announced by him, in the spirit of the party's founder slain president Ziaur Rahman's ideology, patriotism, honesty and efficiency.

Most of the party leaders already expressed their support for the reform proposal announced by Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, but a few others including front organisation leaders are still supporting the chairperson.

Mannan Bhuiyan on June 25 announced his reform proposal, which said a member of the party cannot be the chairperson or the secretary general for more than two terms. Later he also announced a comprehensive proposal and taken initiatives to hold a party council amid the state of emergency.

The chairperson and his supporters rejected the idea as they said they also wanted to implement their own reform proposals, and that the council can only be held once the ban on indoor politics is lifted.

Khaleida Zia later alleged that a group of leaders led by Mannan Bhuiyan were hatching conspiracies to break up the party, but Bhuiyan rejected the allegation.

Bhuiyan and his followers tried to

contact field level leaders in the last two months to get their support for his reform proposal, while Khaleida Zia talked to leaders at home and abroad through teleconferences.

"We are representing the party," Mannan Bhuiyan said at the briefing when a reporter asked him whether they will form a new party as the party chairperson had expelled him.

"We will take necessary decisions through discussions among ourselves," he said when asked whether they will take any action against the party chief.

When his attention was drawn to the BNP constitution, which says the chairperson may expel anyone anytime, he said, "It is not logical to abuse power just because someone has it."

JOINT STATEMENT AGAINST KHALEIDA

About 130 BNP leaders in a joint statement issued yesterday also rejected the expulsion of Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and Ashraf Hossain by party chief Khaleida Zia and termed the decision as undemocratic and unconstitutional.

Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman read out the statement during a news briefing held in Bhuiyan's Gulshan residence yesterday evening.

"Khaleida Zia herself pushed the party into a rift through the expulsions in an undemocratic way, at a time when the party unity should have been maintained," they said, adding that Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan had taken initiatives to hold a party council to have the reform proposal adopted to fulfil the people's expectations in the changed political situation.

"Leaders and workers got inspiration from the initiative of Bhuiyan, but Khaleida Zia pushed the party into a deep crisis through her decision to expel the secretary general and the joint secretary general," they added.

Terming Khaleida's decision as divisive and immature, they rejected

it and urged all party members to remain united and to move forward with the reform process.

Standing Committee Members M Saifur Rahman and Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman, Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Deputy Speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddique, 17 former ministers and state ministers, and 110 former lawmakers are among the signatories of the statement against Khaleida's decision.

Although BNP has 12 members in the standing committee including detained Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain and Moudud Ahmed, only three of them signed the statement.

At the briefing only two of the 14 vice-presidents -- Maj (retd) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed and Kamal Ibne Yusuf -- were present with Bhuiyan, while another Vice-president MK Anwar had signed the statement though he was not present at the briefing.

Among others Mofazzal Karim, Maj (retd) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, Kamal Ibne Yusuf, Shah Abul Hossain, Maj (retd) Kamrul Islam, ZA Khan, MA Hakim, Ashraf Hossain, Zahur Uddin Swapan, Sardar Shakhawat Hossain Bakul, SA Sultan, Ali Newaz Khaiyum, Masud Arun, Nazir Hossain, Ziaul Haque Mollah, Nasirul Haque Sabu, Shahriya Akhter Bulu were present at the briefing.

Obituary



Alhaj Md Mizanur Rahman, managing director of Haji Printing and Packaging Ltd, passed away at Birdem Cardiac Hospital in the city yesterday at the age of 58, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, one daughter and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

He was also a member of Bangladesh Mudran Shipa Samity. Chairman of the Samity Md Rabbani expressed deep shock at his death and conveyed his sympathy to the bereaved family members.

Sati Rani Das

A CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Sati Rani Das, mother of slain journalist Goutam Das, passed away at Faridpur Medical College Hospital on Sunday at the age of 65.

She is survived by her husband, two sons and two daughters.

Her son Goutam, Samokal bureau chief in Faridpur, was killed at his office on November 17 in 2005.

Death anniversary



Today is the 38th death anniversary of Abdul Hamid Chowdhury, former speaker of the erstwhile Provincial Assembly and father of former president Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury, says a press release.

On the occasion, Qurankhwani and milad mahfil will be held at Nagbari in Tangail.

A memorial meeting will also be held at Nagbari Hasina Chowdhury High School.

A close associate of Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Huq and HS Suhrawardy, Abdul Hamid Chowdhury served as deputy president of Bengal Legislative Council from 1939 to 1947.

He was deputy high commissioner of the then Pakistan in Kolkata from 1952 to 1954. He was elected Dean of the diplomatic core there.

From a housewife to premiership

FROM PAGE 1
was assassinated in 1981 during an abortive military coup and Gen Ershad came to power a year later.

Conspicuous by her low profile and image as the retiring housewife during her husband's presidency, Khaleida rose to prominence when she was appointed vice-chairman of BNP in 1982, the party founded by Ziaur Rahman in 1979. She later assumed the BNP chair in August, 1984.

Much like her political rival--Awami League (AL) chief Sheikh Hasina--Khaleida was brought in to quell the rising tensions within the party, unite the disparate forces within the party and fill in the power vacuum in BNP following Ziaur Rahman's death.

As BNP chair, she worked to unify political opposition to the authoritarian Ershad regime, forming a seven-party coalition alongside a similar grouping formed by the BNP's main rival, the AL.

During the nine years of military rule, Khaleida Zia was arrested seven times.

While she led the BNP's movement against the Ershad regime, she faced three attempts to break up the BNP from powerful forces within the party. Khaleida's adroit management of these three blows to the BNP strengthened her hold within the party and cleared her way to launch the upsurge against Ershad with a united BNP.

By 1990, discontent over Ershad's rule and support for the opposition political parties had grown sufficiently to convince the president to step down and organise fresh elections. Khaleida Zia led the BNP to a convincing victory in February 1991.

The 1991-96 Khaleida-led govern-

AL for justice to Khaleida

FROM PAGE 1
The veteran AL leader said it is laughable that Hasina took bribe to buy land for the trust when she donated her own house to it for the welfare of the people.

He said several thousand people, including poor students, get stipend regularly from the trust.

Hoping that they would get justice in the "false and baseless" case against Hasina, the AL leader vowed to carry on with legal battle in a bid to get his party chief released.

"We're not mulling over any other alternatives".

The ACC case statement said Hasina and six other people helped Wartsila Power Development Ltd Consortium and its two local partners win a deal on setting up three 100 megawatt barge-mount power plant in Khulna, Shikalbaha and Haripur, depriving the lowest bidder.

The three companies paid Tk 3 crore in kickbacks, which was spent on buying a house at Dhanmondi for the Bangabandhu Memorial Trust, according to the case statement.

On whether the government earned neutrality by arresting Khaleida and Hasina, Zillur said they don't want to compare the two leaders, adding that it would be ludicrous if the government tries to do so.

He claimed that Sheikh Hasina turned the country into a golden Bangla by solving power crisis and lowering prices of essentials during her tenure in office.

"Khaleida Zia, on the other hand, turned the country into a failed state: she is responsible for all the crises the country is now into," the former AL general secretary alleged, adding that the BNP-led coalition government resorted to wholesale corruption, misuse, torture and repression and desecrated the country.

The Khaleida-led coalition government also destroyed the entire electoral process, he alleged.

"So we don't want to compare the two leaders. We don't want to denigrate one or uplift the other through

comparison," said Zillur.

Alleging that many BNP leaders who were involved in corruption have not yet been arrested, Zillur questioned why cases have not been filed against Tarique Rahman when he presided over widespread corruption during the tenure of the previous coalition government.

"Corruption cases should be filed against Tarique Rahman at first," he observed.

He expressed his dissatisfaction over the government's stance on Jamaat-e-Islami and asked to know why no cases have been filed against the party's top brass.

"The government should look into the matter," he suggested.

AL leaders Motia Chowdhury, Ataur Rahman Khan Kaiser, Maj Gen (retd) Subid Ali Bhuiyan and Advocate Rahmat Ali were, among others, present at the briefing.

Mixed reaction among public

FROM PAGE 1
made Bangladesh the most corrupt country in the world," he said. He said successive governments always ignored the general people. They always thought about themselves and were busy with changing their own lot.

Many said there were rumours of Khaleida's arrest after the arrest of Awami League President Sheikh Hasina.

"It is nothing surprising since the rumour of Khaleida Zia's arrest was already around," said Mokhlesur Rahman, an employee of a private firm in the capital. "I think the move was made to balance out the actions taken against the rival party," he added.

A retired police officer told The Daily Star that during his days in service he had to carry out many unlawful orders from high-ups. With her arrest, he expects that such practices from Bangladesh politics would go forever.

Nazmul Alam, an electrical equipment dealer said, "We [referring to general people] all suspected that they

were corrupt, now charges have been brought against them. We want her [Khaleida Zia] to be given exemplary punishment, if the charges brought against her are proved... if not she should not be harassed."

Kabir Ahmed, an NGO worker, said that Khaleida Zia's arrest proves that the government is sincere in its crackdown on corrupt people in the country.

When asked for comments, Mizanur Rahman, a banker, became a bit angry and said the government arrested Khaleida Zia and Sheikh Hasina to implement their "minus-two policy". The government's plot will not be successful, he added.

"None is above the law and those who stole people's money and were involved with corruption must be brought to justice," said an owner of a shoe shop in the capital.

"I think her arrest was not handled properly. The process through which she was arrested is not very clear to us as she was arrested within a few hours of the filing of the case," said a banker seeking ano-

nymity.

Many low-income people claimed the arrest did not affect them at all as it would not bring any positive changes to their lives. "It does not matter whether they were arrested or not as it does not bring any good to us," said Shah Ali, owner of a pharmacy at Karwan Bazar in the city.

He claimed he has not seen any changes in the lives of low-income people since the caretaker government came to power. Rather the prices of essentials are going up and out of their reach, he said.

During their "corrupt" regimes the situation was far better, he said adding that the government should concentrate more on price hike of essentials rather than arresting top political leaders.

Many claimed the government's move would not bring any positive changes for the country rather it might even create an anarchic situation.