

Khaleda lands

FROM PAGE 1
In a white chiffon saree, Khaleda however smiled and waved outside the courtroom. At that time, a group of party faithful were chanting slogans.

Meanwhile, sources in the administration said that more graft cases would soon be filed against her.

According to the BNP constitution, she will be disqualified from holding the party chief's post and retaining the membership if she is convicted of graft.

Immediately after the court orders, the security forces whisked her off to the makeshift jail. This is for the first time she has landed in a prison in a political career spanning over two decades.

Late president Ziaur Rahman who founded the BNP in 1978 after taking over state power as a military ruler won public support for what many political observers say his stance against corruption. But the image of his widowed wife, who ruled the country for 10 years since restoration of democracy in a mass upsurge in 1990, has been tainted by corruption allegations.

During her last stint as the prime minister, many of the party lawmakers and leaders had allegedly been involved in massive corruption and made a huge wealth.

The country's political situation turned volatile in October last year as the BNP-led four-party alliance tried desperately to hold the ninth parliamentary election despite the AL-led grand alliance's decision to boycott the polls that they viewed were designed to bring BNP and allies back to power.

Amid violence and chaos on the streets, President Iajuddin Ahmed, who assumed the office of the chief adviser sidestepping various constitutional options, stood aside as the caretaker government chief on January 11. He declared the state of emergency and postponed the election scheduled for January 22.

Fakhruddin Ahmed took the reins with a promise to rid politics of corruption before holding the stalled parliamentary election. In February, his administration launched a crackdown on graft suspects and began rounding up the political and business heavy weights on charge of corruption.

LEGAL PROCEDURE
Opposing Khaleda's plea for bail, Assistant Commissioner (prosecution) Maqbul Hossain Khan yesterday told the court that it is a very sensitive case and so she should be confined to jail till the investigation is completed.

He also petitioned the court to place Koko on a 10-day remand.

Hearing both the sides, Magistrate ABM Abdul Fattah rejected the bail prayer and sent her to jail. He also placed Koko on a seven-day remand in police custody. Khaleda's other son, Tarique Rahman, who was perceived to be the most powerful man during the last BNP government, has already been detained on graft charges.

The assistant commissioner (prosecution) told the court that an application for bringing the case under the emergency power rules has been in process at the home ministry.

Once the case is brought under the emergency power rules, Khaleda will not be entitled to bail, and she will be ineligible to contest the polls if found guilty by a trial court.

The same day the investigation officer of the case submitted a petition seeking permission to carry out a search of the cantonment residence. In response, Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Jalal Ahmed assigned Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Ashrafuddin to conduct the search.

Earlier, the assistant commissioner (prosecution) placed the case dockets and read out the charges brought in the first information report (FIR) and the forwarding report.

Moving the petitions for bail and cancellation of the remand prayer, the counsels for Khaleda and Koko told the court that the two have been implicated as part of a conspiracy to harass them.

GOVTACTIONS AGAINST HER
On June 12, Khaleda, Tarique Rahman and 12 other BNP leaders, who were directors of Daily Dinkal Limited, were sued for not submitting service returns of the daily for the past several years.

Under the Income Tax Ordinance, 1984, the Central Intelligence Cell (CIC) of the NBR had earlier asked the banks to provide it along with bank account information of Khaleda and 10 other family members.

Finally on August 29, the NBR asked all banks to freeze the accounts of the former prime minister, her son Koko and nine others of her family.

Sources said the government is preparing to file a case over Khaleda's wealth statement submitted to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), which has gross anomalies.

The NBR recently allowed Khaleda to legalise Tk 1.30 crore undisclosed money on payment of Tk 33 lakh tax but rejected Tarique and Koko's bid to legalise Tk 18 lakh and Tk 1.5 crore respectively by paying a total tax and fine of Tk 44 lakh.

Earlier, the High Court quashed two graft cases against Khaleda Zia filed during the AL regime regarding decoration of her house and airbus purchase.

PAST SEVEN MONTHS OF KHALEDA
Khaleda, who ruled the country for a maximum period as prime minister and run the party with an iron fist, became isolated within the party as most of the senior BNP leaders started keeping away from her since the beginning of the crackdown on the political bigwigs.

After the declaration of state of emergency, Khaleda kept running party activities from Hawa Bhaban, popularly known as the alternative powerhouse during the BNP regime, until slapping of the ban on indoor politics on March 7.

Next, she was reportedly put under pressure to leave the country, but later she changed her mind and decided to face the situation.

In June, BNP leaders led by Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan came up with a set of reform proposals with a provision to exclude Khaleda from the helm of the party.

In the face of challenges from senior party leaders, Khaleda started holding teleconferences with other party leaders and activists within the country and overseas, urging them to be united against any 'conspiracy' against BNP.

Earlier in May, Khaleda cancelled her Singapore trip for medical check-up as her younger son Koko was sued for extortion and was barred to leave the country.

Most recently, she was not allowed to visit the grave of late president Ziaur Rahman on the occasion of founding anniversary of BNP on September 1.

KHALEDA'S HEALTH CONDITION
Khaleda Zia is physically fit now, DIG (Prison) Maj Shamsul Haider Siddiqui told a private television channel yesterday.

He also said that after arriving at the sub-jail, Khaleda took a cup of tea and then went to take rest.

In the sub-jail, she would be provided with four newspapers to read and a colour television to watch Bangladesh Television, the state owned television channel, the DIG said.

Replying to another query, he said that both Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina would receive same facilities in the sub-jails.

Says Mainul

FROM PAGE 1
He said the rule of law as well as life and property of the people will not be ensured without ensuring honesty and accountability of the politicians through legal process.

"It's clear to all that they have been arrested and produced before the court on graft charges," he said, adding: "They have been accused of misusing powers in awarding a Tk 80 crore contract to an indenting house for container handling at Kamalapur and Chittagong Inland Container Depots (ICDs)."

"It's a breach of trust by an elected prime minister," said the adviser.

The adviser said it took time to file cases against Khaleda and Hasina as the government's anti-crime drive is going ahead with an open mind.

"This is not to make a balance... ACC filed the cases on the basis of evidence," he said.

Mainul said the two former prime ministers have been produced before the court giving due honour. "It may be unpleasant, but it (the arrests) has been done in the interest of the country," he said, adding that they committed crime against the country and the people.

"The people in power must have accountability to the law," the adviser said, adding that the government is not only to fight corruption but also to establish the rule of law.

The adviser said the time has come to start a new phase on many issues to make politics comfortable.

Tense hours

FROM PAGE 1
6:30am: Khaleda comes at the entrance and the forces inform her that they have come to arrest her and her younger son Arafat Rahman Koko. She asks them to wait at the guardroom.

7:45am: Khaleda and Koko get into two jeeps and they are driven away.

7:50am: The joint forces start searching Khaleda's residence.

8:05am: Khaleda and Koko are brought to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka.

8:20am: Court proceedings start.

9:23am: Khaleda delivers her speech before the court in her defence.

9:38am: Khaleda's speech ends.

9:42am: Court proceedings end.

9:45am: Koko is taken out of the court.

9:47am: Khaleda is taken out of the court and the vehicle carrying her starts for the sub-jail.

10:10am: Khaleda is taken into the sub-jail at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban complex.

Civil society

FROM PAGE 1
"The persons arrested must be entitled to protection of law," the former adviser said adding that the government should see that the trial process is followed according to law and the constitution and in a transparent way.

Another former adviser to a caretaker government, M Hafizuddin Khan, said "Nobody is above law, but due legal procedures and transparency must be followed in all cases."

A former vice chancellor of Dhaka University (DU) Moniruzzaman Mia said it will not be right to make comment on a matter that is sub judice.

"We should now wait for the judgement. It is only after the pronouncement of judgement that we can make comment on how convincing the evidence of corruption was against her," Moniruzzaman told The Daily Star.

Another former DU vice chancellor, Emajuddin Ahmed, declined to make any comment on Khaleda's arrest.

Moments

FROM PAGE 1
As the law enforcers requested her to let them in, she sounded agitated, "What for? You have already checked my house thrice. Why again?"

At around 7.30am, Khaleda finally stepped out with her son Koko to their uncertain future. She still looked angry.

As she walked to the vehicle, she almost said in a monologue: "I am very sad today. Why are you taking away the Zia family members one after another? Why don't you just round them together and send them to the firing squad?"

Hours later, as she stepped inside the lavish Speaker's house-turned-sub-jail complete with central AC, she looked to be lost in a different world far from her palatial luxury. She was received by the inspector general of prisons. A little hesitantly, she muttered: "I never did any household work. You know I am suffering from arthritis. May I have my personal servant to do my works?"

The jail officials said they would look into the rules if her request could be complied with.

Khaleda was then led upstairs to her bedroom. As the officials left her to herself, Khaleda gave them a crucifying last look.

Bhuiyan, Ashraf

FROM PAGE 1
secretary general of BNP. **LETTER TO ABDUL MANNAN BHUIYAN**

Despite a ban on politics even on indoor politics amid the state of emergency, you have been holding meetings in your Gulshan residence for some days with the so-called reformist leaders and have been expressing many opinions to the media against the interest of the party and on the so-called reforms.

You have disclosed to the media some internal affairs of the party without any approval from the council, standing committee, or the chairperson.

Your actions are a conspiracy to split the party and against the party's discipline, ideology, constitution, interest, and policies.

As the party chair, I cannot remain a silent witness to these activities. And that is why, to uphold the discipline, unity, and the interest of the party, I am removing you from the post of the secretary general and expelling you from the party by cancelling your primary membership following section 5 (Ga) and 8 (Kha) (2) of the party constitution.

This order will be effective immediately.

While the Hawa Bhaban destroyed the government, another action by Khaleda Zia destroyed the BNP itself. That was the unceremonious removal of Dr Badruddin Chowdhury from the position of the Head of State. The founding secretary general of the BNP, one of the earliest comrades of its founder Gen. Ziaur Rahman, (years before Khaleda Zia entered into politics) and one of its most revered leaders, Dr Chowdhury was made the President after the 2001 election.

Within seven months of assuming the Presidency he fell out of grace (why we still don't know, and in her arrogance she never bothered to give any explanation to parliament or to the public) and was forced to resign in a most humiliating manner. This was done without the slightest consideration to either

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The mandate

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She could have brought an end to her confrontational politics by offering a hand of co-operation to the opposition, which ruling parties with massive parliamentary strengths usually do. Instead, from the very start, she took a tough policy in dealing with them starting from physical attack on the opposition immediately after her election victory. Terming it as wrath of common people for AL's misgovernance, the BNP and its allies turned a blind eye to, if not directly participated in assaults of thousands of AL activists in several districts.

Subsequent repression on rallies by the opposition, denying them their due participation inside the Jatiya Sangsad and never giving any importance to them in formulating policies resulted in the erosion of the moral strength that such a huge mandate usually carries. Instead of her unprecedented strength leading to farsighted, conciliatory fence-mending attitude, she became imperial in personal style, arrogant in political behaviour and condescending in dealing with important members of her own party. She attributed her party's sweeping victory to her son Tarique Rahman's election management, and as such, she felt ready to bring him directly into the power structure both of the party and of the government.

The proof of this is the growth of the Hawa Bhaban, which truly and practically became the second centre of power after the PMO. In fact, in some instances the Bhaban was more effective than the PMO itself as functionaries often felt that getting the son's support was more useful than the mother's as the latter's consent could be taken for granted if the former's was already there.

In our view, the seed of destruction of Khaleda Zia's government was sown almost immediately after her election victory. That seed was the size of the new government. Initially it was supposed to be small, say of round 35 to 40 members. But about 48 hours before oath-taking the word came out that the cabinet would be nearly of 60 members, the highest ever in Bangladesh, and bigger than most governments in the world.

This was Tarique Rahman's first major foray into governance. He insisted on appointing his loyalists as deputy or state ministers virtually in every ministry. So we had a dual government where the cabinet ministers were reporting to the PM while their deputies to Tarique Rahman.

Over time, as more and more cabinet ministers found out that they were being either overridden in decision making, or totally ignored, they realised where the real governance emanated from and either started visiting Hawa Bhaban or became inactive.

In fact only a few ministers like Saifur Rahman, Mannan Bhuiyan, Khondakar Mosharraf wielded some power. Others literally became ciphers. The duality in government brought about by the rise of the Hawa Bhaban, which Khaleda Zia permitted or at least did nothing to stop, made it impossible for the government to function and as such destroyed it.

As loyalty to the Bhaban resulted in lucrative postings, extensions of job tenure and enhanced stature within the administration, the bureaucracy became totally politicised, followed by other branches of the government, especially the police and its branches.

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the dignity of his office (after all it was the highest constitutional post) or respect for the contribution he made in making BNP one of the two largest parties in the country.

The humiliation did not end there. When the venerable doctor wanted to float his own party, BNP goons beat him up and the factories and residences of several of his main supporters were set on fire. So much for respect for rule of law. With the firing and humiliation of Dr Chowdhury it became evident, if evidence was at all necessary, that the BNP from now on would mean only Khaleda Zia and Tarique Rahman, and that party loyalty would be defined as total, unquestioned and blind support for the Zia family.

The mother and the son's writ would be party law and the slightest trace of dissent would result in the swift dismissal from the party. So the ouster of Dr Chowdhury transformed the BNP from a party with whatever little semblance of collective decision making to one of total centralised power to be run on personal whims and caprice of first the mother, Khaleda Zia, and later the son, Tarique Rahman.

As we had said earlier, the Hawa Bhaban destroyed the government and Dr Chowdhury's dismissal destroyed the party. Both these events occurred within seven months of Khaleda Zia's second term. From then on it was a one-way slide downwards, presided over by the leader who got such a huge parliamentary majority and who really had a chance to change Bangladesh as we know it and who, with a little bit of modesty and capacity for introspection and self criticism, could have done it.

We are deliberately not bring on the issues of corruption under Khaleda Zia's tenure as she has been accused of it and the matter should be decided in court. However, it must be mentioned that evidence of graft was all around. While we continued to be termed as the most corrupt country in the world, our elected government preferred to do nothing to stem it except blaming those who were saying so.

It is amazing how little concern was expressed for the issue of corruption and how little was done to investigate the thousands of corruption stories that the media relentlessly published. Instead of finding out the culprits, it was the media that were accused of deliberately maligning the image of the country. Whether or not Khaleda Zia was personally corrupt, the courts will decide. But the fact that she tolerated it and did absolutely nothing to either fight corruption or even to raise it as a matter of concern, are now a matter of record.

Now that Khaleda Zia is in custody we will insist that she be given all the protection of law and rights guaranteed by the constitution, especially since she has been twice our elected prime minister. Yet today we cannot but feel deeply sorry for the magnificent opportunity she wasted. Instead of giving us a Bangladesh of unity and growth she left us in a mire worse than the one when she came to power.

Criminal cases

FROM PAGE 16
poursabha of Bhola district), Md Azaduddin Chowdhury (Ramgati poursabha of Laxmipur), Kazi Fariduzzaman Tipu (Baufal poursabha of Patuakhali district), Sajjad Karim Montu

Miah (Moksudpur poursabha of Gopalganj district), Haji Didar Pasha (Melandah poursabha of Jamalpur district), Md Belayet Hossain (Ramgarh poursabha of Khagrachhari district), Akkas Ali (Bagha poursabha of Rajshahi) and Md Sydur Rahman (Durgapur poursabha).

Besides, chairman of Dhamrai poursabha under Dhaka district Dewan Nazimuddin Manju has been removed," said an official announcement yesterday.

Earlier, 12 poursabha chairmen, 19 union parishad (UP) chairmen and 11 members were removed or suspended on charges of corruption, money embezzlement, abuse of power, repression on women, going abroad illegally, remaining absent from meeting for more than three days and for being accused in criminal cases.

people unitedly rallied round him under the banner of this nationalism. Thus he saved the country from terrorism, disorder and chaos and hastened its development," Khaleda said.

She said conspirators were active even at that time, plotted plans and killed Zia. Many people then thought the party (BNP) would not survive.

Turning to her taking over as party chief she said, she was unwilling to get involved in politics but the people brought her to politics. And she never betrayed them and always fought for their cause. Repeated terms of house arrest could not make her backtrack from her mission.

"Now, neither I nor my sons have any craving for money as we are bestowed with the love of people," Khaleda said.

Pleading the court to exempt her and her son Arafat from the 'false' case, she said, "We will tell the nation that we are innocent and we will remain with them."

Claiming themselves innocent Khaleda also appealed to the people to pray for them.

BNP won't

FROM PAGE 16
party as secretary general for the last 11 years but never felt the necessity of reforms, he added.

Delwar also said a legal battle to free the BNP chief has already started and will continue. Other programmes would be announced after consultation with the party leaders.

"Khaleda Zia would remain chairperson of BNP despite her captivity as the party constitution has no provision for acting chairman," he said in reply to a question.

Asked if BNP is facing a split with the change in leadership, Delwar said it would not be proper to bring about a split in the party on the question of reforms.

Demanding immediate release of the party chairperson, Delwar said, "Khaleda's release is now our prime responsibility...Reforms could be implemented in the normal process later on."