

We're mainstream

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of the party and late president Ziaur Rahman.

The organisers, however, said it was not a meeting since there is a ban on politics and that they only used microphone and loud speakers for an "informal" discussion.

Leaders and workers present at the meeting chanted slogans to express their solidarity with Mannan Bhuiyan and other senior leaders.

Bhuiyan said at the meeting, "Suddenly they have expelled me although I have been in the party for the last 25 years. They can take my post but they cannot expel me from the party without issuing any notice...We cannot accept such leadership."

Bhuiyan, who was a powerful minister during the BNP-led alliance government, expressed his determination to keep the party united. He said, "The image of the party has been destroyed in the last five years. So, sacrificing leadership would be reinstated in the party and the corrupt and terrorist leaders will be excluded."

"We have to implement reforms to restore the party's image," he said, adding that a collective leadership of honest and competent persons should be established.

"Some persons are speaking against reforms. They looted public wealth when the party was in power...They have no popularity and they cannot win the election without the help of the administration," he said.

Bhuiyan also said the country cannot go back to the situation before January 11 since it saved the nation from a civil war like situation. "The real face of many persons have been made public after January 11," he noted.

Hinting at Bhuiyan's expulsion, Sadeque Hossain Khoka said Khaleda Zia proved the necessity of reforms before her arrest. "It was an unnecessary decision at a time when the party needed unity," he said.

"It is not a time to get post or position...Take the leadership after implementation of reforms," he said directing at Khandaker Delwar Hossain and Hannan Shah.

Former minister and BNP Vice President Major (retd) Hafiz Uddin

Ahmed said the party chairperson has started the dividing process in the party through the expulsion order.

"Who took the decision? Did they inform the party standing committee? It is absolutely an undemocratic decision," he said, adding that the party could not hold a council in the last 24 years.

Mofazzal Karim, an adviser to the BNP chairperson, said, "We cannot accept this kind of expulsion as both the expelled leaders have sacrificed for the party."

"They made the expulsion order to let corrupt people in the party, but we will not allow anyone to destroy the party," he said, adding that the party will boost up under the leadership of Mannan Bhuiyan.

Former lawmaker Tasnim Rana said, "Khaleda Zia expelled the leaders who are not corrupt, so we cannot support the expulsion decision."

Another former lawmaker Fazul Azim said, "Those who have been forced to leave the party in the last five years should be brought back."

Sardar Shakawat Hossain Bakul said the party will run under the leadership of senior leaders, including Mannan Bhuiyan, in the absence of the chairperson.

"The expulsion has created an environment of division in the party. So, we have no alternative to a united BNP to make the party democratic through reforms," said Zahiruddin Swapan, a former lawmaker and information and research secretary of BNP central executive committee.

Former lawmakers and district leaders Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, Ashraf Hossain, Asadul Habib Dulu, Abdul Aлим, Mofiqul Hasan Tripti, Rezaul Karim, Joyanal Abedin, Mosharrar Hossain Bangu, AFM Nazmul Huda, Shah Shahid Sarwar, Delwar Hossain Khan, Ali Nawaz Khaiyam, Abdul Hye, Shah Abul Hossain, Abdul Khaledaue Chantul, Major General (retd) Mahmudul Hasan, SA Sultan Titu, Shamsul Alam Pramanik, Ataur Rahman Angur, former student leader Monir Hossain, Syed Emran Reza Nur of Brahmanbaria, and Tofazzal Hossain of Narsingdi, among others, attended the meeting.

Verdict in gold smuggling case against Ershad today

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court will pass its judgment today in a gold smuggling case against former president and Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad, which was earlier adjourned six times on different grounds.

Judge Mohammad Abul Bashar at the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court will return the verdict at 11:30am, courtsources said.

Both the prosecution and the defence completed their arguments. The court recorded statements of eight prosecution witnesses, including the complainant and investigation officer (IO) of the case.

Describing the background of the case, the prosecution said a team of customs officials held four people, two of them foreign nationals, at Zia International Airport on July 17, 1990 as they were attempting to smuggle in around 3.6 kgs of gold worth about Tk 2.5 crore.

A case was filed against the four -- Bernhard Rudiger of Germany, Englishman David Anthony Chalmers Chaker, the airport's then manager Major (retd) Ashraf Uddin Sekender and Abu Taher, an airport security guard -- with Cantonment Police Station the same day.

Ershad's name was included in the charge sheet on August 31, 1991 after the IO found evidence of his involvement in the smuggling bid.

The trial against Ershad, however, was shelved for several years following a High Court (HC) stay order.

Delwar warns

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"They have to face the same fate -- allegations of subversive activities [against the party] might be raised against them," he said when the reporters asked him about what he meant by the word 'risk'.

"But we will take the decision through discussion with party leaders," Delwar said, adding that everyone will get the opportunity to rectify his or her actions and return to the party so the party stays united.

Questioning how Bhuiyan was able to call a meeting amid the state of emergency, Delwar said, "... is there no restriction for him?"

"It is the duty of the government to enforce the law [state of emergency] neutrally," he added.

The new secretary general said the letter expelling Bhuiyan and Ashraf, signed by Khaleda Zia, would be forwarded to the Election Commission so they can take necessary steps in this regard.

Rejecting the expelled leaders' claim that their expulsion was 'unconstitutional and undemocratic', he said the chairperson is empowered to appoint or to expel anyone.

Among others, party leader Ashraf Uddin Nizam, who had earlier signed a joint statement criticising Bhuiyan's expulsion order by Khaleda Zia, was present during the briefing.

Former lawmaker Rehana Akhtar Ranu later told The Daily Star, "Many other former lawmakers who had signed the joint statement are keeping contact with Delwar."

Fakhruddin

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to the hassle of "red tape" for business licences in Old Dhaka.

Replying to concerns regarding government plans to demolish illegal structures, Fakhruddin said the government hopes to finalise a policy on this regard by the end of this month.

He also said the trade licence issuing process for people intending to do business in the old part of Dhaka would be revamped so the bureaucratic bottlenecks disappear and innovative entrepreneurs feel more encouraged to contribute to the prosperity of the country.

Fakhruddin also reiterated the government's commitment to turn the state-owned oil distribution companies as well as Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTL) into public limited companies by September 30.

He also observed that the interest rates are currently very high and those ought to be reduced to encourage investment in the country.

The chief adviser suggested that private limited companies should float shares in the market by turning the companies into public limited companies to be able to lower their costs and bring in a greater volume of capital for further investment and expansion of the businesses.

He also said the government has been working toward raising Bangladesh's ranking in the annual global Doing Business report of the World Bank to at least 15 spots higher by the end of 2009.

Bangladesh was ranked 88th in the 2007 Doing Business report.

Mig-29 case

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government lawyers today.

An official of the now defunct Bureau of Anti-corruption (Bac), Abdullah Al Zahid, filed the case on December 11, 2001 with Teigaon Police Station accusing five including Hasina.

According to the First Information Report (FIR), the government incurred a loss of Tk 700 crore on account of the warplane purchase for Bangladesh Air Force. Hasina was Prime Minister then.

The long pending appeal from Hasina finally came up for hearing following the government's sudden move for its quick disposal.

Lotus Kamal

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Court, Dhaka issued the arrest warrants against Obaidul Karim and the five bankers after taking the embezzlement into cognisance.

Apart from Obaidul Karim, the other accused in the case are Oriental Bank's former senior vice-president Shah Mohammad Haroon, incumbent senior assistant vice-president AQ Mahmud Ullah, former assistant vice-president Mohammad Fazlur Rahman, incumbent assistant vice-president Neyamutullah and executive officer ANM Raqibul Islam.

The corruption watchdog's Assistant Director Rafiquzzaman, also the investigation officer (IO), submitted charge sheet against the six to the CMM court on August 27, showing 12 people as prosecution witnesses.

The IO included the names of Neyamutullah and Raqibul in the charge sheet as he found evidence of their involvement in the corruption during investigation, although their names were not mentioned in the first information report (FIR).

ACC Assistant Director Abdul Latif filed the case against Karim and three other people with Motijheel Police Station on February 1, accusing them of embezzling Tk 6.7 crore from the principal branch of Oriental Bank Ltd.

ABBAS CASE
Judge Mohammad Abu Mohsin of the Fifth Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court will decide on September 9 whether to frame charges against the former housing minister.

The court set the date yesterday after hearing arguments from the prosecution and the defence on the issue in the presence of Mirza Abbas.

Motijheel police submitted the charge sheet against the former minister to the CMM court, showing 14 people as prosecution witnesses.

The case was filed against him on February 24 under the Special Powers Act, Money Laundering Act and Excise Act.

The joint forces seized stacks of local and foreign currencies and other items from Abbas' South Shahjahanpur residence in the capital on February 4.

The items seized included sales receipts for gold ornaments worth Tk 40 lakh, 4,600 US dollars, 17,000 Thai bahts, 418 Singapore dollars, 432 Malaysian ringgits, several mobile phone sets and five passports.

The complainant of the case, Sub-Inspector Rafiqul Islam, alleged that Abbas had kept those in his possession, evading tax.

HARRIS CASE
Judge Sayed Jahed Mansur of the Metropolitan Special Tribunal-9 yesterday finished recording statements of all the prosecution witnesses in the case for keeping foreign currencies at his Gulshan residence.

The court set September 10 for arguments.

Sub-Inspector Babul Hossain at Gulshan Police Station, also the investigation officer, submitted the charge sheet to the CMM court, showing 18 people as prosecution witnesses.

The joint forces on February 4 seized two briefcases from Harris' Gulshan residence. The briefcases were found to be full of foreign

DU syndicate

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"By the time, we'll appoint the two acting deans to hold the Deans Committee meeting on September 9, which is essential for holding the syndicate meeting scheduled for September 11," Prof Faiz told reporters.

The two posts are now vacant as Social Science Faculty Dean Prof Harun-or-Rashid and Biological Science Faculty Dean Prof Anwar Hossain were arrested following the August 20-22 student unrest on the campus.

All public universities of the country were declared closed for an indefinite period on August 22 in the wake of the student unrest.

currencies after they were opened on April 2 in the presence of Metropolitan Magistrate Mir Ali Reza.

Gulshan police on April 9 filed the case against Harris under Money Laundering Act. The case statement said Harris planned to smuggle out the foreign currencies worth about Tk 5.64 lakh.

Earlier on May 22, a special court sentenced Harris to three years in jail for not submitting wealth statement to the ACC within the stipulated timeframe.

HELAL CASE
Detained Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) president Azizul Baree Helal was sent to jail after a 10-day police custody in connection with two cases filed for allegedly disrupting law and order on the Dhaka University campus.

Metropolitan Magistrate Shah Alam Sardar passed the order after Ramna police produced Helal before the court on completion of a four-day remand.

In the forwarding report, the IO mentioned that the accused gave important information on the incidents which was being verified. He should be confined in custody until the investigation is completed, the IO said.

Detective Branch (DB) of police arrested Helal at his Moghbazar residence in the capital on August 24.

MILON CASE
Metropolitan Magistrate ABM Abdul Fattah yesterday sent former BNP lawmaker AKM Fazlul Haque Milon to jail after Ramna police produced him before the court.

He was shown arrested under the Emergency Power Rules. Police told the court that he amassed huge wealth through illegal means while was a BNP lawmaker.

The former Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal president was arrested as he was driving through the upscale Gulshan neighbourhood on Tuesday.

He had been absconding since the joint forces started the crack-down on corruption suspects.

Our Barisal correspondent reports: A Barisal court yesterday sent Barisal City Corporation Mayor Majibor Rahman Sarwar to jail after completion of a ten-day remand in two phases in connection with a murder case.

Barisal Sadar Upazila Magistrate Munim Hassan also gave order to send three other accused -- Abdus Sobhan, Mamun Talukder and Kalu Kha -- to jail after rejecting their bail prayers.

Mayor Sarwar was produced before the jam-packed court amid tight security. His counsel prayed for bail, saying no importation information about his involvement in the crime was found during investigation.

Opposing the bail prayer, Mihir Kanti Das, who stood on behalf of the state, said vital information was found about the mayor's involvement in the murder of Tera Shajahan.

After hearing arguments from both sides, the judge turned down the bail prayers and sent Sarwar and the three other accused to jail.

Iajuddin

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alongside maintaining transparency and accountability in all spheres of national life for creating a meaningful democratic atmosphere," he said in a message marking the end of his tenure.

President Iajuddin, who took over as the country's 18th president on September 6, 2002, will stay in office until his successor is elected.

He thanked the government and the people for their continued cooperation in discharging his duties.

"The people of our country are very courageous. They can face any kind of natural calamity and they have been doing that for long. And we'll build Bangladesh as a prosperous country with the united efforts of all," said the president.

He also prayed to Allah for the well-being of the country as well as its people.

Son of Shajahan Siraj

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concealing information about his wealth on his tax returns on different occasions.

In each of the cases Rajib was sentenced to three years imprisonment for providing false information and to five years imprisonment in connection with concealing information.

He was fined Tk 3 lakh under each section of the cases. In default of each fine, he will have to serve additional six months in jail, totalling four years of additional jail term.

According to prosecution sources, Rajib, director of Precast Concrete Industries Ltd, dodged Tk 4.32 lakh in tax year 2004-2005, Tk 5.15 lakh in 2005-2006 tax year, Tk 12 lakh in 2002-2003 tax year and Tk 4.80 lakh in 2006-2007 tax year.

The court of Judge Shamsunnahar set up at the MP hostel in Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban complex delivered the verdict after examining evidence and witnesses' depositions.

Charges were framed against the accused on August 8 while the deposition of the witnesses began on August 9. The court on August 28 fixed yesterday for delivering the verdict.

With the latest verdict, Rajib is sentenced to a total of 40 years' imprisonment in five cases filed for tax evasion.

His mother Rabeya Siraj was

Sohel, Salman

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with each other took out a loan of over Tk 158.67 crore submitting seven wills of 130.42 acre lands of Beximco Properties Development Management and showing false wills of Beximco Holdings as equitable mortgage. The accused also showed 112 fake organisations' accounts while taking the loan.

The top brass of Beximco Group and the ex-IFIC officials were involved with the procedure to release the credit violating banking rules and misusing power.

The case was filed under section 5(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act of 1947 and sections 409, 420, 462 (Ka), 462 (Kha), 467, 468, 471 and 109 of the Penal Code.

CASE AGAINST GASUDDIN AND HIS FAMILY

The ACC yesterday filed a case against former BNP lawmaker from Narayanganj Gasuddin Ahmed, his two wives and son for concealing information in the wealth statement submitted earlier to the ACC.

In the case filed with Ramna Police Station, ACC Assistant Director Khairul Huda mentioned that their investigation found that Gasuddin's property is worth around Tk 20.84 crore, which is at odds with his known source of income.

Gasuddin also concealed information about property worth around Tk 14 crore in the wealth statement which include a BMW jeep and a market at Siddirganj in Narayanganj, the complainant added.

BNP updates

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constitution, Khaleda Zia expelled secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and joint secretary general Ashraf Hossain on charge of violating party discipline and involving in activities against party interests, said the letter addressed to Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda.

Mannan Bhuiyan and Ashraf Hossain's primary memberships to the party have also been cancelled, it added.

"They do not belong to the party anymore and they do not represent any leaders or workers of the party at any level," said the letter signed by Rizvi Ahmed, assistant office secretary to BNP.

The BNP also submitted copies of BNP chairperson's decisions regarding the expulsion of Bhuiyan and Ashraf on September 2 and appointment of Khandaker Delwar Hossain as BNP secretary general.

Contacted by a group of journalists through his personal secretary, CEC Huda however refused to make any comment on the issue.

Meanwhile, a faction of BNP leaders rejected the expulsion of Bhuiyan and Ashraf, claiming that they are the mainstream of BNP.

"We hope, the Election Commission will contact with our new secretary general for any official purpose," Mohiuddin Khan Mohon, former assistant press secretary to ex-premier Khaleda Zia, told reporters after submitting the letter to the CEC.

The BNP sent this letter at a time when the EC is sending invitations to secretaries general or general secretaries of selected 15 political parties for holding talks on electoral reforms. According to the EC's plan, the BNP is scheduled for the talks on November 22.

Hasina

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However, a few BNP lawyers were supposed to go to the sub-jail yesterday to receive detained BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's signature on vokalatnamas.

One of Khaleda's lawyers Advocate Helal Uddin Mollah told The Daily Star, "We could not meet our detained leader since the process to meet her is yet to complete."

DIG (prison) Major Shamsul Haider Siddiqui said Tuesday so far three applications from the relatives and lawyers of Khaleda have been submitted to the jail authority. He said the applications are being verified and the applicants will be informed later.

DU violence

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fully independent, has access to all persons and information that it considers relevant to its enquiries, and is able to ensure protection of witnesses.

The enquiry's conclusions and recommendations should be made public, and the government should issue a public response indicating the steps it will take to implement those recommendations, she said in the letter.

Use of excessive force by police as well as reports of torture and ill-treatment of detainees while being interrogated by law enforcement personnel is deeply concerning, Irene said urging the authorities to take concrete measures regarding these reports.

The detainees have also been denied access to lawyers and family members in clear violation of international human rights standards, the AI noted and expressed concern for those detained and for extended periods denied access to lawyers and family members, including Dhaka University professors Harun ur Rashid and Anwar Hossain, and Rajshahi University professors Sayedur Rahman Khan, Abdus Sobhan and Moloy Kumar Bhowmik.

Corruption suspects

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aligned with economic good sense for the country, he said at a dialogue between the government and business leaders on "Bangladesh Economy and Future Perspective" organised by the commerce ministry at Radisson Water Garden Hotel in the capital.

Recent 'unfortunate' and 'deplorable' incidents at Dhaka University would leave a 'mole' on the first seven months of the present government, he said.

Pressed on when the anti-corruption drive would stop so businesses can work without fear, Moeen said, "One hundred and forty-two corrupt people have been named by the NCC. This list will be finalised by the end of this month. The final number should be around 220 people, it should not cross that number."

He also announced that tax officials, anti-corruption officials and police department officials will receive higher salaries from October 1 and it is an effort to reduce the chances of them harassing the business community.

Moeen said this is a reformist caretaker government that cannot be politically popular because it is taking some hard decisions, but has the silent popular consent of 99.8 per cent of the people.

"This caretaker government has received an overwhelming mandate of the population, and still the majority is bearing the pressure of high price, relocation, reforms and system improvements," Moeen said while referring to a figure of 99.8 per cent, which was being projected on the screen. This percentage of people, he said, is silently supporting the government.

"I appreciate the patience on part of the people being able to understand that unlike any other

previous caretaker this is a reformist caretaker government. As it is taking some hard decisions, it cannot be politically popular but has a silent popular consent from every citizen of the country," Moeen added.

"I call this realisation and change a new social contract, reminding us of our objective at hand and indicating the need for reconciliation for economic development and nation building," he said.

Referring to last month's violent demonstrations at Dhaka University, Moeen said it has 'left a mole in last half year's governance of the caretaker administration'.

"Disputes and problems, whatever its variety, whether they are subtler act of few academicians or naked form street hostility of agitated innocent citizens are deplorable, and once more proved that students are hostage to the unconscious politics in the government universities and colleges both by their political masters and patrons," he said.

He said the country's economic policy has to be framed by the expectations of students, rickshaw-pullers, garment workers, nurses, clerks as well as corporate leaders. "It is crucial in our policy to create hope and express confidence in our business community for promoting an equitable society, quality of life and reducing economic disparity," he added.

The army chief, however, said, "The government will not go beyond acceptable norms and thereby harm the foundations of the economy. In other words, political reforms must be aligned with economic good sense for the country to prosper in both these fields."

Pakistan rounds up

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troublemakers who were instigating violence in their speeches," a government official said on condition of anonymity.

"It is not a general crackdown. It is specific to those who may create a serious law and order situation."

However, former premier Sharif's intention to return to Pakistan was criticised late Tuesday by Saudi Arabia, the country that gave him shelter after he was ousted by Musharraf.

"Wisdom dictates that Mr Nawaz Sharif abide by his promises not to return to Pakistan and to political activity," said an unnamed spokesman quoted by the state SPA news agency.

The spokesman denied what he said were claims in some Pakistani newspapers that Riyadh "supports" the return of Sharif and his family to Pakistan.

He said the kingdom had offered Sharif asylum for humanitarian considerations, which the Pakistani government and Musharraf had responded to positively.

Meanwhile, former premier Benazir Bhutto told AFP yesterday there had been progress in talks on a power-sharing deal with President Pervez Musharraf and that she was ready to meet him face to face.

The two-time prime minister added that she would return home from self-exile on corruption charges in London and Dubai in "weeks, not months," ahead of presidential and parliamentary elections due in coming months.

"There has been progress in some areas and we are working on those areas," she told the news agency in a telephone interview after the stalled negotiations restarted this week, adding that the progress was "good."

"I prefer face-to-face negotiations (but) between himself and myself I also appreciate that he has got a country to run and that might be very difficult," she said when asked if she would meet the military ruler.

Talks held in London last week between aides of Benazir and

Musharraf ended in deadlock, with the ex-premier saying that she would announce a date for her return on September 14.

But the negotiations restarted in the Gulf emirate of Dubai this week.

Asked when she now planned to fly back to Pakistan, which she left in 1998, Benazir said that it would be "weeks, not months."

Benazir said one of the key issues in the negotiations -- whether Musharraf will quit his role as army chief ahead of his bid to be re-elected as president in September or October -- was "resolved". She did not elaborate.

The main progress in this week's talks was on the issue of "free and fair elections," she said. Sources from her Pakistan People's Party said these included the setting up of a caretaker government before polls.

But the negotiations are now focused on solving other sticking points, including whether Musharraf, who seized power in a bloodless coup in 1999, should cede his powers to dissolve parliament, Benazir said.

Meanwhile Benazir put forward her credentials as a moderate leader who would be tough on Islamic militancy, a growing problem in Pakistan amid pressure from Washington to crack down on Taliban and al-Qaeda rebels.

Negotiations between the Musharraf and Benazir camps were given extra urgency last week when another former premier, Nawaz Sharif, said he planned to return to Pakistan from exile on September 10.

Sharif was ousted by Musharraf in 1999 and has vowed to oppose the president's bid to be re-elected.

He has criticised former ally Benazir's dealings with Musharraf, slamming her for dealing with the "dictatorship".

'Massive' terror plot