

AL leaders move

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and Prof Abu Sayeed were offended by some rowdy party activists before and after the AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC) meeting.

Swift initiatives to hold the party together were stressed during informal talks last night at the Gulshan residence of AL Acting President Zillur Rahman. Among others, Motia Chowdhury, Mahmudur Rahman Manna and Akhtaruzzaman were present. The leaders also requested Zillur assign to an AL leader for making dialogue preparations with the EC.

On Tuesday night, in another meeting, Tofail Ahmed, Mukul Bose, Abdul Mannan, Mahmudur Rahman Manna, Akhtaruzzaman, Prof Ali Ashraf, Dr Mostafa Jalah Muiuddin, AKM Jahangir Hossain, Habibur Rahman Khan and many other leaders discussed various issues including unity in the party, dialogue with the EC and party President Sheikh Hasina's release.

The meeting opted for dialogues with the EC upon receiving the formal invitation from the EC.

A few leaders present at the meeting told The Daily Star that Tofail had telephoned them to join in the meeting.

The AL leaders present at the meeting advised Tofail that rather than holding informal meetings with anyone he should sit with all at the party office to ensure unity in the party.

The same night, a number of AL leaders including Tofail Ahmed, Abul Mai Abdul Muhit, Saber Hossain Chowdhury and Asaduzzaman Noor met with Actin President Zillur Rahman.

They urged Zillur to take measures for improving relations among the party leaders. They also suggested that the AL should hold dialogues with the EC.

AL Probe body
AL has approved one more month for the submission of report by the

one-member probe body, headed by presidium member Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, that had been formed to investigate the September 12 assault on four senior AL leaders.

Meanwhile Mukul Bose yesterday submitted several names of suspected individuals who directed to assault the leaders on September 12.

AL advisory council member Maj Gen (ret'd) Subid Ali Bhuiyan who was present during the September 12 incident outside the party office yesterday submitted his written statement to the probe body.

Bomb kills 5 in Lebanon

AP, Beirut

A powerful bomb killed a pro-government parliament member and four others yesterday in a Christian suburb east of the Lebanese capital, security officials said.

The blast targeted Antoine Ghanem, 64, a member of the right-wing Christian Phalange Party, said the officials, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to the press.

The Voice of Lebanon radio station, which is owned by the Phalange party, also confirmed Ghanem's death. The identities of the others killed were not immediately known.

The attack occurred six days before parliament was scheduled to meet to elect a new president in a deeply divisive vote. Ghanem is the eighth prominent anti-Syrian figure assassinated since 2005, including three lawmakers from the majority, reducing the ruling party's margin in parliament.

Tigers

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Durban, Justin Kemp blasted an unbeaten 89 of 56 balls after Morne Morkel claimed four wickets for 17 runs as South Africa thrashed New Zealand by six wickets.

The hosts restricted the Black Caps to 153-8 after giving them first strike at the Kingsmead and then knocked off the modest target with five balls to spare.

Kemp hammered six sixes and as many boundaries in his match-winning knock, ending the match by lofting Mark Gillespie over the long-on fence for six.

Kemp added 65 runs for the fourth wicket with Mark Boucher (23) and an undefeated 48 for the fifth with Shaun Pollock, who remained unbeaten on 16.

The emphatic win was set up by 22-year-old fast bowler Morne Morkel who ensured that New Zealand lost wickets at regular intervals.

Morkel narrowly missed becoming the first Twenty20 bowler to claim five wickets when his penultimate ball which clean bowled Gillespie was declared a no-ball by umpire Billy Doctrove.

Craig McMillan top scored for New Zealand with 48 not out in an innings studded with four sixes.

Morkel had McCullum (38) and Ross Taylor (one) caught behind by wicket-keeper Mark Boucher in the ninth over.

Morne Morkel returned for his second spell to bowl Jacob Oram and had Shane Bond caught by Boucher.

Govt ups prices

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tonnes of TSP in the current fiscal year; of this only 50 thousand tonne will be produced in the country and the rest will be imported. The demand for potash is 4 lakh tonne and the entire demand will be met through import, the sources said.

In the last fiscal year the government subsidised Tk 594 crore for around 10 lakh tonnes of TSP, diammonium phosphate (Dap) and potash. But, although three months have passed of the current fiscal year, the government has not yet taken any decision on the matter which is discouraging private importers to import these essential fertilisers.

BFA officials said private importers imported 1.25 lakh tonnes of TSP and 80 thousand tonnes of potash during the last fiscal year but 80 thousand tonnes of TSP and 37 thousand tonnes of potash still remain unsold because of the delay in government declaration about subsidy.

BFA Chairman Kafil Uddin Ahmed said, "The private sector importers could not import fertiliser as the government is yet to take any decision about the subsidy. This may result in a fertiliser crisis during the upcoming Irri-Boro season."

He said the prices of fertiliser on the international market have increased greatly. In the previous year, the price of TSP was \$215-220 per tonne but now it has increased to \$440. The price of potash was \$225-230 and it has increased to \$330, he added.

Major parties

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parties permanently soon after they [the political parties] register with the Election Commission (EC). The parties, however, will have to seek to receive their desired symbol to the EC."

According to the current laws, before a parliamentary election, the EC allocates temporary symbols to political parties contesting the election.

In the meantime, the EC has proposed to cancel four or five election symbols, such as Minaret, book and sankho, considering their religious aspects, Sohul added.

Asked whether the EC would also cancel 'scales' as an election symbol -- as demanded by a number of political parties -- he said the EC had no such plan at the moment.

However, "since 'scales' are recognised as emblem of justice worldwide, and if different political parties demand for the cancellation of the symbol, the commission might take a decision on the matter," he added.

Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakhawat Hussain said if a political party does not contest the parliamentary election, the election symbol it usually uses might be allocated to a different party upon request.

City's low-lying

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recede further in next 24 hours, improving the flood situation in the northern districts of Sirajganj and Tangail.

Citing FFWC bulletin, BSS reported that water flow in the Ganges-Padma is also likely to continue to fall, which will further improve the flood situation in the south-central districts of Rajbari, Faridpur, Manikganj, Munshiganj, Madaripur, Shariatpur, Gopalganj, Chandpur and some upazilas of Dhaka.

The FFWC said flood situation in Sylhet and Sunamganj is seeing gradual improvement.

Official sources said 61,510 people have taken shelters at 167 centres in the flood-hit areas.

Rajuk houses

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information report (FIR) with Motijheel Police Station against 12 individuals, including detained former minister Mirza Abbas, for causing a loss of over Tk 127 crore to the national exchequer by selling 18 abandoned houses.

It was stated in the FIR that these individuals in connivance with each other sold or approved the selling of 18 abandoned houses in the capital's posh areas of Gulshan, Banani, Dhanmondi and New Eskaton through fake auctions. These houses were sold at much lower prices than the market ones.

Their irregularities caused the government a huge loss of Tk 127.64, 19,059.86, the FIR said.

Although the FIR was filed against 12 accused, there will be 25 names in the charge sheet as involvement of 14 others, including a former commerce minister, was found during investigation. The name of ex-Works Division executive engineer Syed Mahfuz Ahmed, who was one of the accused, will be dropped, as his wrongdoing was not proved during the investigation.

Those accused in the FIR are Mirza Abbas, former secretaries SM Jafarullah and Shahid Alam, ex-Rajuk executive engineer Riazul Monir, ex-Works Division executive engineer Syed Mahfuz Ahmed, ex-Rajuk superintending engineer Mohammad Ali, former Rajuk finance director Humayun Khan, former Rajuk estate director and managing director of Sonargaon Hotel Golam Nabi, ex-joint secretary of Information Ministry Mir Mosharraf Hossain, ex-Rajuk chief engineer Emdadul Islam, ex-project director of Purbachal Town Development Project Abdus Sadek and ex-Works Division superintending engineer Ziauddin Ahmed.

The 14 individuals who are also going to be included in the charge sheet along with 11 others are

former commerce minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, former prime minister Khaleda Zia's political secretary Harris Chowdhury, former MP Kazi Anwar Hossain, former secretary Iqbal Uddin Chowdhury, managing director of Cocola Foods Shukkur Miah, chairman of a housing developer SM Anwar Hossain, Niu ze Mendes, Nurul Sofa, Shafiqur Rahman Kiron, Chittagong Awami League leader Afzar Uddin's wife Hasna Ahmed, Ambia Group Managing Director Abul Kasem, former secretary general of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira) Ali Haider Chowdhury, Mehedi Hasan of Orion Group and Basundhara Group Chairman Ahmed Akbar Sobhan alias Shah Alam.

Ganotantri Party

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Ganotantri Party will hold the talks with the EC today while JSD (Inu) will seat with EC on Oct 9.

"Jamaat, which had killed people, raped women and committed other crimes during the Liberation War, has no right to take part in election. EC should not to register Jamaat and other religion based political parties to uphold the dignity of independence," JSD President Hasanul Haq Inu said.

Ganotantri Party Advisory Member Azizul Islam Khan said that they would also ask EC to take stern actions against using of black money, illegal arms and religious sentiment during the election.

Among others JSD General Secretary Syed Jafar Sajjad, Executive President Mainuddin Khan Badal, Joint Secretary Iqbal Hossain Khan, Ganotantri Party President Nurul Islam and General Secretary Gias Uddin Haider were present at the meeting held at Colonel Taher Auditorium in the capital.

Extortion charge

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the Tejgaon police stations and also issued a rule upon the government.

But the Supreme Court stayed the HC order following government appeals and directed the HC to dispose of the matter. The matter was on the HC cause list. The defence lawyer prayed for adjournment of passing any order on the acceptance of the charge sheet till disposal of the rule, they added.

Gulshan Police Station Officer-in-Charge Obaidul Haq, also the investigation officer of the case, submitted the charge sheet against Hasina, Rehana and Selim to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court on July 24.

Azam J Chowdhury, managing director of Eastcoast Trading Pvt Ltd, filed the case with the Gulshan Police Station against Hasina and Sheikh Selim on June 13 for extorting Tk 2.99 crore from him.

Rehana's name was included in the charge sheet as her involvement with the extortion was found during investigation.

GRAFT CASE
Metropolitan Magistrate Mizanur Rahman passed the order after Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) deputy director submitted a petition for showing Hasina arrested in the case.

ACC Deputy Director Sabbir

Hasan filed the case against Hasina and six others on September 2.

The co-accused in the case are former energy secretary Dr Toufik-e-Elahi Chowdhury, former Power Development Board (PDB) chairman Noor Uddin Mahmud Kamal, Summit Industries and Mercantile Corporation Private Ltd Managing Director Aziz Khan, its Director Farid Khan, United Group Chairman Hasan Mahmud Raja and its Director Abul Kalam Azad.

The ACC said following a mutual understanding, Hasina and the six accused used their influence to help M/s Wartsila Power Development Ltd Consortium and its local partners -- Summit Group and United Group -- win a deal for setting up three 100MW barge-mount power plants in Haripur, Shikabaha and Khulana depriving the lowest bidder.

The case statement said Hasina, the then prime minister, received kickbacks from the two power companies from October 24, 1996 to November 24, 1997.

Joint forces arrested the AL chief in connection with the case on July 16 and produced her before a magistrate's court that sent her to a sub-jail.

Two more extortion cases were filed with Tejgaon Police Station against Hasina on April 9 and June 13.

Traders

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businessmen of Chittagong on September 25 to restore confidence among them.

Apart from the commerce ministry initiative the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB), Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), and the Department of Fisheries are also continuing to operate their fair-price outlets across the country getting positive public response.

The chairman of the committee said BDR is operating 270 fair-price outlets across the country, 100 of which are in the capital.

TCB is operating 45 stationary outlets and 15 mobile trucks in the city. Mostakim said TCB has in its stock 886 tons of sugar, 252 tons of lentil, and 466 tons of edible oil for sale.

Quoting from the daily price list of essential goods of TCB the committee chairman said prices of most of the essential goods remain steady in the first week of Ramadan.

Representatives of different ministries and departments also attended the meeting.

5 cops held

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in the capital at 1:30pm on Tuesday. Sources said the detectives then patrolled different city streets with Ibrahim on board for several hours.

Later they forced Ibrahim out of the vehicle in front of the High Court after taking Tk 1.90 lakh and 120 Malaysian Ringgit from him, sources added.

The detectives told Ibrahim that they could have arrested him, as he is engaged in hundi business.

They also asked Ibrahim not to say anything to any one about the matter.

Ibrahim said he came to the capital with the money as his younger brother has planned to go abroad.

Ibrahim filed a case under the Speedy Trial Tribunal with Paltan Police Station accusing the seven.

Police also recovered the money from the police detectives.

Top defaulters

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Janata Bank's performance was a bit better and it realised Tk 32.9 crore while its target was Tk 27.5 crore for the six-month period.

In case of other defaulted loans, Sonali Bank recovered Tk 231.91 crore in the first six months of the year's target of Tk 440 crore, Janata Bank Tk 118.16 crore against the target of Tk 165 crore, Agrani Bank Tk 118.76 crore against its Tk 275- crore target and Rupali Bank realised Tk 13.15 crore against the target of Tk 66 crore.

Credit disbursement of Janata and Agrani declined in June this year compared to December last year's. But loan disbursement of Sonali and Rupali rose during the period.

According to available data, Janata Bank's credit declined by 2.67 percent and Agrani Bank's by 1.55 percent. Sonali and Rupali's credit rose by 0.77 percent and 2.46 percent respectively.

Earlier, the central bank had set a limit of credit growth in the NCBs that says it will not exceed five percent comparing to that of the previous year.

Overall defaulted loans increased as new loans were defaulted.

Total classified loans of Sonali Bank went up by four percentage point to 29.59 percent in June compared to December last year while that of Janata rose by 0.93 percentage point to 14.13 percent.

Agrani Bank's classified loans went up by 0.81 percentage point to 28.91 percent in June while that of Rupali rose by 10.04 percentage point to 36.07 percent.

Writ petition

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son, for possessing wealth "beyond known sources" of his income.

"After 15 days of their (Khaleda and Arafat) arrest in connection with a corruption case, it was recently placed under the EPR just for rejecting their bail petition," the lawyer contended.

About the ACC decision to file corruption case against Tarique and taking the case against Khaleda Zia under EPR, he said, "It is regrettable, unfortunate and not fair."

"Tarique Rahman doesn't have any property in the country and elsewhere outside his shown assets. The daily Dinkal is not one's personal property, it's the property of BNP," he said.

Refuting the allegation of leaving out from the wealth statement Tarique's possessed lands at Uttarkhan in the city, Ahmed Azam said former president Ziaur Rahman had bought those lands paying Tk 3,300 in 1974 when he was a brigadier. And it is also mentioned in Khaleda Zia's statement submitted to the ACC.

Responding to a query, the lawyer said Tarique Rahman didn't buy any property with controversial businessman Giasuddin Al Mamun, who is also in jail. About NBR decision not to receive taxes of Tarique and Koko's undisclosed income, he said, "We will go to higher court against the National Board of Revenue in that connection, too."

The lawyers in the panel also urged the government to ensure better treatment of Koko, now under treatment at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMU) Hospital, by sending him abroad.

Legal trouble

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realising taxes, they said, adding that it cannot realise or ask for taxes that remained unpaid for five years.

However, without following any of the provisions or maintaining a relaxed process of tax realisation the NBR charged taxpayers in their cases with providing false statements and concealing information in their declarations.

It also charged the accused under the Emergency Power Rules although the offences date back to the time before the declaration of the state of emergency.

"The NBR is moving away from its main objective of collecting revenue. Rather than making doggers pay tax, the NBR is working to punish them which should not be its first task," said Zikrul Ahmed.

There are 26 tax evasion cases in the five special anti-graft courts set up on the National Parliament premises on May 5. Of them judgments have been given in 17 cases against eight persons, seven of them tried in absentia.

Nine cases are still on trial. Two of the detained accused--former housing and public works minister Mirza Abbas and former state minister for power Iqbal Hassan Mahmood Tuku--challenged the cases against them. The HC stayed the proceedings of the cases and issued rule upon the government.

Another writ petition filed by former state minister for labour and employment Amanullah Aman awaits HC decision.

JUDGMENTS GIVEN SO FAR

In the first ever tax evasion case filed on May 23, former BNP lawmaker Ali Asgar Lobi was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment.

Shahajan Siraj, his wife Rabeya Siraj, son Rajib Siraj and Rajib's wife Farzana Khan were sentenced to different terms ranging from eight

years to forty years in 12 tax evasion cases. All were tried in absentia.

Afroza Abbas, wife of detained former minister Mirza Abbas, was sentenced in absentia to 16 years' imprisonment in two cases. Dhaka City Corporation Ward Commissioner Mirza Khokon was sentenced in absentia to eight years in jail on September 10.

The convicted were also fined different amounts.

Eight cases including those against Mirza Abbas and detained Awami League Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader and his wife Isratunnessa are pending with the special court.

Police get fund

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fund to sub-inspectors who usually investigate cases.

Deputy Inspector General (Finance) Benzir Ahmed and other top police officials also addressed the function.

The police officials said their proposal seeking 25 percent of the basic salary as risk allowance to each policeman is still in the process for government consideration. If the allowance is granted, it will cost the government additional Tk 128.22 crore.

The proposal seeking Tk 100 a day for three meals for an accused in police custody is also pending for the government's consideration. The present allowance is Tk 10.

The proposal also sought increase in the family ratio of a married constable to 80 percent from the existing 60 percent and for head constables to 100 percent from the present 80 percent. It also sought increasing the travel allowance for a constable to Tk 500 a month from the existing Tk 30.

Commonwealth

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retention of two offices, as spelt out by the Commonwealth heads of government in Malta in November 2005," it said.

The 53-nation club of mainly former British colonies said at the meeting in Malta that Musharraf must ditch his military role and become a civilian leader by the end of 2007.

The group expelled Pakistan for five years after Musharraf seized power in a coup in October 1999.

Pakistan's presidential election is expected before October 15. Musharraf's now says that if elected he would be sworn in as a civilian leader before his current term as president expires on November 15.

A top aide to Musharraf said the likely dates for the election are between October 7 and 9. The election commission is expected to issue a formal schedule by the end of the week.

But the opposition, dominated by the party of self-exiled former premier Benazir Bhutto, has threatened to resign from parliament, saying that Musharraf's plan to be re-elected in uniform was unconstitutional.

Bhutto has been in slow-moving talks with Musharraf, a key ally in the US-led "war on terror", on a power-sharing deal that would involve him quitting the army before elections.

Nepal's Maoists

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Most mainstream political parties in the country are in favour of ditching the monarchy, and under the terms of last November's peace deal, the question was supposed to be decided by a democratically-elected constitutional body.

But the Maoists, who had entered government after agreeing to end their decade-long armed struggle, say the highly unpopular king -- who has already been stripped of most of his powers -- should be removed immediately.

Although the Maoists have stopped short of renouncing the ceasefire and reviving their insurgency, they can call upon a number of ethnic and caste supporter groups, as well as the feared Young Communist League (YCL). The YCL have already come under fire for thuggish, violent behaviour.

Further talks to resolve the crisis, however, were ongoing.

Although they have left the government, the Maoists were continuing to hold discussions with the seven other mainstream parties in the defunct coalition, said Dev Gurung, who had served as local development minister until Tuesday.

"We can hold protests and talks in parallel," said Gurung. "The door to discussion is always open. We are hopeful that they will rethink our proposition and seriously consider our demands."

Talks between the Maoists and other parties resumed

US backs reforms

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time to perform the tasks and the international community will support it.

The chief adviser told Gastright that the government is working relentlessly to create an atmosphere conducive to holding a free and fair election not only for one term but also for the following terms, strengthening the democratic process.

Referring to the ongoing electoral reform process, the CA said people of all strata appreciated the steps taken by the EC for establishing transparency and accountability in political parties, and for initiating steps to make it mandatory for parliamentary political parties to be registered with the commission. The parties have already started reforming themselves, he added.

Due course of law is being followed in handling all affairs, including the drives against corruption, Fakhruddin told Gastright adding that the government is upholding human rights.

Our staff correspondent reported that following the meeting with Foreign Adviser Iftexhar A Chowdhury, Gastright said the voters of Bangladesh have the responsibility to support candidates who are 'empowered' by the government's ongoing political and electoral reforms.

"I would like to point out that free and fair elections are a two-way street. The people also have the responsibility to make certain that they support candidates who are empowered by this institutional framework," Gastright told reporters following his courtesy call on Iftexhar A Chowdhury at the foreign ministry yesterday.

Referring to the 'new institutional framework', Gastright said the US is behind the caretaker government's electoral reforms and empowering of institutions of sustainable democracy that will lead to holding free, fair and credible elections.

Speaking at a meeting with newspaper editors at the residence of US Charge d'Affairs Geeta Pasi, Gastright said a vibrant and free media is also a crucial aspect of moving towards restoration of full democracy.

Dhaka seeks US help

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for Brac Area Manager Nurul Islam's release.

"I've already appealed to his kidnappers through the media and written a letter to Afghan Foreign Minister Dr Rangin Dadfar for his release," Iftexhar told the reporters.

On the basis of media reports, Bangladesh foreign ministry has briefed Pakistan about the situation, he added. "I hope the kidnappers won't prolong Nurul Islam's sufferings during the holy month of Ramadan."

Nurul Islam was kidnapped three days into the killing of Brac programme area manager Abdul Alim. A group of unidentified gunmen shot dead Alim, 37, in a village in Badakshan province of Afghanistan on September 12.

ALIM'S BURIAL

Alim was buried at his home in Digore village in Ghatail upazila, Tangail yesterday.

At 11:00am, his body was brought back from Kabul in an Emirates flight. Family members of the deceased and senior Brac officials received the body at the Zia International Airport and took it to Alim's village home.

A gayebana janaza for the deceased was held at Brac Centre in Dhaka after the Johr prayers, attended

by all staff of Brac head office.

Alim joined Brac on January 1, 1996 and had been working in Afghanistan as Brac's Microfinance Programme Area Manager since November 16,