



Hasina's 61st birthday today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina steps into her 61st year today.

The party will celebrate the day in a low-key manner as Hasina has been detained since July 16 on charges of corruption.

Special prayers will be arranged on the occasion.

For the first time in her life, Hasina, the eldest daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Begum Fazlunnnesa Mujib, will observe the day in the jail.

Some relatives of Hasina will meet her at the special jail on the Jatiya Sangsads Bhaban premises to wish her birthday.

"According to the rules, three to four relatives could meet her today," said DIG (Prison) Major Shamsul Haider Siddiqui. Responding to a query, he told The Daily Star that there is scope to celebrate birthday in the jail.

"Leaders and workers of her party might give flowers, but considering security threats we will take decision on whether we will give those to her or not," said the DIG (Prison).

AL will organise a milad mahfil at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial Museum at Road No 32 at Dhanmondi in the city seeking Hasina's release and wishing her vibrant health and long life.

AL acting president Zillur Rahman and acting general secretary Mukul Bose urged all to pray for her release on the eve of her birthday.

Hasina who was born at Tungipara in Gopalganj on this day in 1947 was elected president of the AL at a council session of the party in February 1981 while she was in exile. She returned home on May 17, 1981.

Hasina led the AL to power and became the prime minister of Bangladesh in June 1996, two decades after Bangabandhu along with other family members and relatives was assassinated in August 1975.

In 1968, Hasina married eminent nuclear scientist M Wazed Miah. They have a son and a daughter.

The AL chief escaped an assassination attempt on August 21 in 2004 when a rally of her party came under grenade attacks in the capital that left 24 leaders and activists dead.

Different front organisations of the AL, including its student organisation Bangladesh Chhatra League will also organise milad mahfil on the day.

Bangladesh Muktijoddha Anjibi Parishad will also hold a discussion and doa mahfil.

EC DIALOGUE LDP, JSB discuss common stance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury-led Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) yesterday had a meeting with Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSB). The meeting was the first of a sequence of meetings with different political parties aiming to form a political convention ahead of the next general elections and to have a unified stance during dialogues with the Election Commission (EC).

"We talked about different issues including political reforms and dialogue with the Election Commission and we also discussed about a common stance in this regard," JSB President Hasanul Haq Inu told reporters after meeting the LDP leaders.

"We sat to discuss whether we could have a unified strategy to stop the use of black money and religion in the elections," Inu said.

"We also discussed taking a common stance, demanding disqualification of war criminals and anti-liberation war forces in the election," the JSB president added.

"Prof Chowdhury urged different political parties to be united in bringing a new trend in politics and today's meeting is part of this effort," LDP Secretary General Md (retd) MA Mannan told reporters yesterday.

About the LDP's ongoing dialogue with different political parties, Mannan said, "We will talk with all political parties but we are not thinking about Jamaat-e-Islami and BNP."

LDP will organise a meeting at the Sheraton Hotel in Dhaka on October 8. Leaders of different political leaders are expected to attend the meeting, LDP party sources said.

LDP Secretary General MA Mannan yesterday told reporters that the meeting is going to be political as part of Badruddoza's call to political parties to form national unity.

Free flow of information can curb corruption

Says ACC chief

UNB, Dhaka

Free flow of information can be a strong weapon in curbing corruption, Anti-Corruption Commission Chairman Lt Gen (retd) Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury said yesterday and hoped that the government would take measures to establish the right to information.

He, however, said that only the right to information could not check corruption in a society where the "root of corruption has reached the deepest level."

The ACC chairman was addressing a roundtable titled 'Good Governance and Right to Information' as chief guest at the LGED auditorium in the city. Former adviser to the caretaker government Advocate Sultana Kamal was the special guest at the function.

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), Ain O Shalish Kendra, BNNRC, D-Net, Mass-line Media Centre (MMC) and Manusher Jonno Foundation jointly organised the discussion marking the 'International Right to Know Day'.

Hasan Mashhud expressed the hope that the government would take necessary measures to establish the people's right to information. "The people expect that they will have this right soon," he said.

About the much-talked issue of disclosing the defence budget, he said, "Nothing big will be found if it is made public. Around 90 percent of the budget are allocated for salary purpose... but I personally believe any budget should be made public."

Sultana Kamal said information is also a responsibility. "We can't expect responsibility from an uninformed society... good governance, responsibility and accountability won't be there unless there is free flow of information," she said.

It's the government's responsibility to disclose the resources of the country and how these are being spent, the former adviser said, adding that the government is bound to publish the information.

Associate professor of Dhaka University Robayet Ferdous presented a keynote paper titled 'Role of right to information in ensuring

good governance: Challenge and opportunities'.

TIB Trustee Board Chairman Prof Muzaffar Ahmad presided over the function moderated by TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman.

Speakers at the roundtable said the existing Official Secrets Acts and rules should be updated and misuse of these should be prevented.

They also observed that free flow of information should be ensured and people would have to come out from the culture of privacy and involve themselves in a large number in the movement for the right to information.

Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, editor of The Bangladesh Observer, Prof Asif Nazrul and Dr Golam Rahman of Dhaka University, Governance coordinator of Manusher Jonno Foundation Sanjida Sobhan and Executive Director of DemocracyWatch Taleya Rahman also spoke.



TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman speaks at a roundtable at the LGED auditorium in the city yesterday. On his left are TIB Trustee M Hafizuddin Khan, ACC Chairman Lt Gen (retd) Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury and TIB Trustee Board Chairman Prof Muzaffar Ahmad.

\$271m Brac commitment to education

\$221m to be spent in Bangladesh

Fazle Hasan Abed, founder and chairperson of Brac, yesterday announced \$271 million for providing education to 7.5 million children and youth in Asia and Africa over the next five years, says a press release.

The commitment was made on the first day of the three-day Clinton Global Initiative annual meeting in New York, which brings together global leaders from different fields to address the world's most pressing problems.

Brac has partnered with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the NoVo Foundation and Brac USA to mobilise resources and provide a continuum of innovative educational opportunities for the poor children, especially girls, in Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Tanzania, Uganda and Southern Sudan.

The programme is expected to reach 7.5 million beneficiaries through pre-primary, non-formal primary and secondary schooling as well as skills training and undergraduate and advanced degrees relevant to the needs of developing countries.

Brac will spend \$51.8 million in 2008 and build up to \$271 million by

US BNP protests cases against Tarique, his wife, mother-in-law

STAR REPORT

BNP front organisations in the USA yesterday protested the cases

Anti-Corruption Commission filed

against detained BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman, his wife Dr Zubaida Rahman and mother-in-law Iqlambar Banu.

The organisations include BNP-USA wing, Tarique Mukti Antorjatik Andolok, Khaleda Zia Mukti Antorjatik Andolok (international movements for releasing Khaleda and Tarique), reported News World from New York yesterday.

The leaders of the fronts in their statements said the present government is engaged in a conspiracy to make Bangladesh an ineffective state by destroying the traditional family of the late president Ziaur Rahman, Bangladeshi nationalism, multiparty democracy, Islamic values and by putting the patriotic army against people.

The statement issued by the front organisations said false and fabricated cases are being filed against the Zia family members to create a vacuum in the leadership of BNP and there is also a conspiracy of imposing wholesale blames on the politicians in the name of curbing corruption.

They also threatened the government of waging an international movement if the cases against Khaleda Zia, her son Tarique Rahman and other members of the family are not withdrawn.

Signatories to the statement include BNP USA wing's Senior Vice President Alhaj Sulaiman Bhuiyan, General Secretary Zillur Rahman Zillu, Khaleda Zia Mukti Antorjatik Andolok Coordinator Hashem Bulbul, member secretary Belal Mahmud, Tarique Mukti Antorjatik Parishad coordinators Sharafat Hossain Babu and Rafiqul Islam Chowdhury Dollar, Jubo Dal US President Zakir H Chowdhury, general secretary Abu Sayeed Ahmed, Chhatra Dal US wing's Convener Arif Hossain Mithun and member secretary Ataur Rahman Tota, News World reported.

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at one or two places over all the six divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met office said.

Highest temperature 34.4 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessor and Madaripur and lowest 24.4 degree Celsius at Srimongal and Majidpur Court.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:49pm today and rises at 5:49am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	33.8	26.6	71	68
Chittagong	31.2	26.0	73	79
Rajshahi	32.5	25.5	89	88
Khulna	32.8	26.5	80	83
Barisal	33.0	26.0	74	58
Sylhet	34.0	25.4	81	66
Cox's Bazar	32.7	26.0	83	80

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DV 2009

Applications to be accepted Oct 3-Dec 2

Applications for the 2009 Diversity Visa (DV) Lottery will be accepted between noon Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) (GMT-4) (10:00pm Bangladesh Time) on October 3 and noon Eastern Standard Time (EST) (GMT-5) (11:00pm Bangladesh Time) on December 2, says a press release.

Applicants may access the electronic Diversity Visa entry form at www.dvlottery.state.gov during the registration period. Paper entries will not be accepted. Applicants are strongly encouraged not to wait until the last week of the registration period to enter. Heavy demand may result in website delays. No entries will be accepted after noon EST (11:00pm Bangladesh Time) on December 2.

The congressionally mandated Diversity Immigrant Visa Programme is administered on an annual basis by the Department of State and conducted under the terms of Section 203(c) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). Section 203(c) of the INA provides a maximum of up to 55,000 Diversity Visas (DV) each fiscal year to be made available to persons from countries with low rates of immigration to the United States.

The annual DV programme makes diversity immigrant visas available to persons meeting the simple, but strict, eligibility requirements. A computer-generated random lottery drawing chooses selectees for diversity visas.

The visas, however, are distributed among six geographic regions with a greater number of visas going to regions with lower rates of immigration, and with no visas going to nationals of countries sending more than 50,000 immigrants to the United States over the period of the past five years. Within each region, no one country may receive more than seven percent of the available Diversity Visas in any one year.

The Diversity Visa application instructions in Bangla are available on the Embassy's website at dhaka.usembassy.gov.

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The government has formed a seven-member committee to make realistic recommendations on strengthening the local government institutions and injecting dynamism into their activities, a government notification yesterday said.

The committee, to be headed by former secretary Dr AMM Shakhat Ali, will place its suggestions to the government within three months of its formation, the notice said.

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