

Delwar predicts united AL-BNP movement to free Khaleda, Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday said a united movement with their archrival Awami League (AL) can be launched in future to have AL chief Sheikh Hasina and BNP chief Khaleda Zia released from jail, despite the parties' having differences.

His observation follows the AL acting president Zillur Rahman's remark that a movement might be launched jointly with the rival parties, but for that to happen there must be some common ground between them. Khandaker Delwar made the comments while talking to the press at his NAM flat in the city.

Meanwhile, ruling out the possibility of any movement at this moment, ZA Khan, BNP chairperson's adviser and a close aide to expelled BNP secretary general

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Mirza Aziz sees bleak prospect of bringing back siphoned money

UNB, Dhaka

Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam has said he sees bleak prospect of repatriation of money siphoned out of the country although the government has not given up its efforts in this regard.

"We're continuing our efforts, but we have to be practical. We should not expect too much," he told reporters on his arrival at Zia International Airport (ZIA) from a conference in Manila yesterday.

The adviser had gone there to attend a two-day international conference of top global and regional trade and finance officials on "Mobilising Aid for Trade: Focus Asia and the Pacific" jointly organised by Asian Development Bank and World Trade Organisation (WTO).

"It's a complex process and time consuming," he said, replying to a question about the prospect for repatriation of money from abroad.

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HC hears today writ petitions of Khaleda, sons

UNB, Dhaka

The hearing on the writ petitions of detained former prime minister Khaleda Zia and her two sons are likely to be held at the High Court today.

Khaleda and her two sons, facing graft cases filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission, have challenged the legality of bringing the cases under Emergency Power Rules debarring them from seeking bail until those are disposed of.

Khaleda and her younger son Arafat Rahman Koko have been accused of awarding a container-handling contract to a private firm, GATCO, by taking Tk 2.20 crore in kickback and thus causing a loss of Tk 1,000 crore to the national exchequer.

The ACC in another case accused her eldest son Tarique Rahman, also Senior Joint Secretary General of BNP, of amassing huge wealth illegally and concealing information in his wealth statement. His wife and mother-in-law were also implicated in the case for helping him protect the illegal wealth.

Get Prayer times from Warid Menu

Iftaar

Sehri

5.50 PM

4.30 AM

Sehri, Iftar timing				
Ramadan	Sept	Sehri	Iftar	
17	30		5-50	
18	Oct 1	4-31	5-49	
19	Oct 2	4-31	5-48	

Prayer Timing		
September 30		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-30	4-40
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-50	6-05
Esha	7-30	8-00
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Make public evidence of all corruption cases

Demand legal experts at discussion on right to information

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Renowned legal experts of the country yesterday demanded disclosure of information and evidence of all corruption cases in recognition of people's right to information.

"Information and evidence of each corruption case and the bank accounts of the suspects have to be made public," said jurist Dr Kamal Hossain at a roundtable discussion yesterday.

After people get such information, they will understand that there were incidents of corruption and that their wealth has been plundered, he added.

At the roundtable organised on the second day of a three-day programme marking the Right to

Information Day 2007, the legal experts preferred enacting a "right to information (RTI) act" as soon as possible to waiting for an elected government to do it.

They were speaking at a discussion titled "Status of RTI in Bangladesh and Its International Standard" in the first session of the roundtable organised by Mass-line Media Centre at the LGED auditorium in association with Manusher Jonno Foundation, Article 19, and the World Bank.

Dr Shahdeen Malik presented the keynote paper at the session chaired by Attorney General Fida M Kamal and moderated by Mass-line Media Executive Director Kamrul Hassan Monju.

Speaking as the chief guest, Kamal Hossain said right to informa-

tion is recognised as a birthright in the UN Human Rights Charter and Article 7 of Bangladesh's constitution.

"To shape and nurture democracy, people need to know how the country is being run, what decisions the government is taking and why," he said, adding that democracy means accountability to people who hold all powers of the state.

Coming down heavily on the critics of the ongoing state of emergency, he said, "Why are we seeing the lists of 80 persons, 100 persons now? Why couldn't the accountability of the influential people be ensured in the last 15 years? Why wasn't this done when there was no emergency?"

Kamal said even if some of these

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Massive reforms in short time may backfire

Says Akbar Ali Khan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former adviser Akbar Ali Khan yesterday said undertaking widespread reforms within a short period of time would more likely affect the country adversely rather than positively.

He said this while speaking at the fourth "Policy Debates on Reform" organised by Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) at a city hotel where several other former advisers, experts and politicians also spoke.

A number of speakers called for the dissolution of the constitutional provision that makes the seat of a member of parliament (MP) vacant if the MP quits his or her political party.

They also called for a constitutional amendment to allocate more powers to the president to take initiatives such as dissolving the

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PHOTO: STAR

An overhead shot taken inside Sonali Bank main branch at Motijheel in the capital that remained open on the weekend yesterday to enable undisclosed money holders legalise their wealth by paying taxes. Story on page 1.

UN envoy flies into Yangon for talks

Troops beat up protesters, fire shots

AFP, Yangon

Security forces yesterday charged two crowds of protesters in the centre of Myanmar's main city Yangon, firing warning shots, beating people with batons and arresting about five, witnesses said.

At Bogyoke Aung San market, a major tourist destination also known as Scott's Market, warning shots were fired to disperse some 500 anti-government demonstrators. An unknown number were arrested, they said.

Nearby at the Pansoedan bridge in downtown Yangon, another 100

protesters gathered. As soon as they started to clap their hands, a squad of about 50 security forces swooped and began attacking them, witnesses said.

"They beat people so badly. I wonder how these people can bear it. I saw the security forces arrest about five people on the streets," said one Yangon resident who witnessed the scene.

Those who were not detained managed to disperse, the witnesses said.

The protests were believed to be the only incidents in Yangon on Saturday, as an overwhelming security operation successfully

choked off mass rallies that attracted 10,000 on Friday and tens of thousands earlier in the week.

"Security members are outnumbering protesters in downtown. The protesters dare not to come to downtown as they would certainly be badly beaten and arrested," another witness at the scene said.

At least 13 people were killed when troops opened fire and launched baton charges Wednesday and Thursday, but the United States and Britain, as well as Burmese opposition groups, have raised fears the death toll could be far higher.

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PIRATED CD, DVD

Bangladesh on US watch list

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

Bangladesh has been put on the USA's watch list of countries that allow operations of some Pakistani companies producing pirated versions of multi-media compact disks (CDs), and digital video disks (DVDs) violating intellectual property rights (IPR).

Due to the inclusion of Bangladesh on the list, the United States Trade Representatives (USTR) can now suggest its entrepreneurs to withdraw their investments from the country or to impose a trade embargo on the country.

According to a report titled

'Special 301' on the adequacy and effectiveness of intellectual property rights (IPR), published by the Office of the US Trade Representatives, some pirate optical disk manufacturing plants migrated to Bangladesh from Pakistan due to the latter's crack-down on those.

The report released on April 30, 2007 said currently six optical disc plants producing pirated products are operating in Bangladesh and are exporting to India and Europe, as well as saturating the local market.

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ACC to quiz six ex-secys in Gatco case

UNB, Dhaka

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) will quiz former six secretaries, including ex-cabinet secretary and PSC Chairman Sa'dat Hossain, tomorrow in connection with the container handling case filed against Khaleda Zia.

Sources said ACC Deputy Director Jahurul Huda issued letters on Thursday to the former secretaries to appear before the three-member investigation team.

Those summoned to the commission also include former information secretary Mirza Tasadduk Hossain Beg, former Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Department secretary Manik Lal Samaddar, former

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PHOTO: STAR

Rickshaws entangled in a jam on Dhanmondi Road-1 in the capital yesterday, a common sight in the month of Ramadan.

30 killed as bomber blows off Kabul bus

AP, Kabul

A suicide bomber wearing an Afghan army uniform set off a huge explosion yesterday while trying to board a military bus in the capital, killing 30 people, most of them soldiers, officials said. The Taliban claimed responsibility.

The blast, which also injured 30 people, ripped off the roof of the bus and tore out its sides, leaving a charred hull of burnt metal. It was reminiscent of the deadliest insurgent attack in Afghanistan since the US-led invasion in 2001 when a bomber boarded a police academy bus at Kabul's busiest transportation hub in June and killed 35 people.

Dozens of civilians and police officers searched for bodies. Police and soldiers climbed trees to

retrieve some body parts. Nearby businesses also were damaged.

"For 10 or 15 seconds, it was like an atom bomb fire, smoke and dust everywhere," said Mohammad Azim, a police officer who witnessed the explosion.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai said 30 people were killed 28 soldiers and two civilians. The Health Ministry said another 30 were wounded.

"It was a terrible tragedy, no doubt an act of extreme cowardice," Karzai said. "Whoever did this was against people, against humanity, definitely against Islam. A man who calls himself Muslim will not blow up innocent people in the middle of Ramadan," the Muslim holy month.

A purported Taliban spokesman, Zabiullah Mujahid, claimed the

militant group was responsible for the blast in a text message to The Associated Press. Mujahid said the bomber was a Kabul resident named Azizullah.

The bus had stopped in front of a movie theatre to pick up soldiers when a bomber wearing a military uniform tried to board around 6:45 am local time, army spokesman Gen. Mohammad Zahir Azimi said.

"Typically there are people checking the IDs of soldiers who want to board the bus," Azimi said. "While they were checking the IDs the bomber tried to get on the bus and blew himself up there."

Kabul's police chief, Gen. Mohammad Aslam Hasas, said Afghan forces shouldn't let strangers get close to them at bus stops.

"They know who should be on

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Musharraf's nomination okayed amid clashes

Sharif may make another home return bid

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani police using teargas and batons clashed with lawyers and journalists yesterday as the election commission approved Pervez Musharraf's nomination for next week's presidential vote.

The brutal show of force by Pakistani authorities came a day after the Supreme Court dismissed challenges to Musharraf's eligibility for the October 6 presidential poll, in a major victory over the opposition movement.

Around two dozen protesting lawyers and six journalists were injured and a similar number of demonstrators were arrested in the violent protests outside the election commission building in Islamabad on Saturday.

The commission said it had approved Musharraf's candidacy and those of two rivals after scrutinising their nomination papers, while rejecting 37 other applicants.

"The other candidates raised objections to Musharraf's nomination but they were not accepted," commission secretary Kanwar Dilshad told AFP.

Musharraf's rivals are Wajihuddin Ahmad, an ex-judge who refused to swear allegiance to Musharraf after the 1999 coup in which he seized power, and the vice chairman of Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party, Makhdoom Amin Fahim.

Chanting "Go Musharraf, go!" around 900 lawyers tried to approach the commission from the nearby Supreme Court but riot police with shields and helmets blocked their way and scuffles broke out, an AFP reporter said.

Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and other government stalwarts

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PHOTO: STAR

FROM LEFT... Awami League central leaders Abdul Latif Siddiqui, Tofail Ahmed and acting president of the party Zillur Rahman holding talks with Workers' Party chief Rashed Khan Menon at Zillur's Gulshan residence in Dhaka yesterday.