

Jail flies to S'pore

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Khan, and Zahid Ahsan Russell was escorted by the jail authorities to the airport around 10.45pm amid tight security where another four tier security detail was put in place.

Deputy Inspector General of Prisons Maj Shamsul Haider Siddiqui was in charge of the security details.

Jalil's personal physician also the chief cardiologist of LabAid Cardiac Hospital, Dr Matur Rahman, who also accompanied the AL leader to the airport, told reporters, after his patient's plane took off, that the former minister looked tired at the airport and was having problems with his breathing.

But in a free environment after getting released he seemed confident enough and sought blessings from the people of the country," said the doctor.

Talking to the waiting journalists, Tofail said the government acted responsibly by allowing the AL general secretary to go abroad for treatment.

"For this I am thanking the government on behalf of Awami League," he said.

Abdul Jalil, a close associate of detained AL President Sheikh Hasina, has been suffering from heart and kidney problems compounded by diabetes. He will be admitted to Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore and all expenses of his treatment will be borne by his family.

A number of AL leaders and some of Jalil's colleagues from Mercantile Bank are likely to follow him to Singapore within a couple of days to be by his side there.

On May 28 last year, the joint forces arrested Jalil from his Mercantile Bank office in Motijheel of the capital. He was in detention under Special Powers Act for more than six months. A case was filed against him on December 18 for concealing information in his health statement, but there has been little progress in the investigation.

The decision to release the AL general secretary on parole was taken at a special meeting of the council of advisers to the military backed caretaker government, held at the chief adviser's office on Sunday, following a recommendation from a high-powered medical board formed for Jalil's treatment.

JAIL BRIEFINGS JOURNALS
Around 7.30pm Jalil was brought out of his cabin in the hospital in a wheel chair.

Talking to the waiting reporters prior to leaving the hospital, Jalil who seemed confident, said he and his family thank the government for allowing him to go abroad for better treatment.

Jalil also sought blessings from the people of the country.

"I once again seek blessings from all including the news media, colleagues, countrymen, party leaders and workers who prayed for me all along, so I may return after getting better," Jalil said.

Earlier, senior AL leaders including Acting AL President Zillur Rahman, Abdul Razzak, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta and Sultan Mohammad Mansur Ahmed met Jalil in the hospital. A few leaders of different components in AL-led 14-party coalition also met Jalil in the hospital.

A number of AL leaders and workers also rushed to the hospital to have a quick look at their ailing leader, prior to his departure.

DOCTOR'S OBSERVATION
Talking to The Daily Star immediately after Jalil was taken to the ground floor of the hospital for transporting him to his residence, Dr Matur Rahman said the condition of Jalil's heart slightly improved, but his kidney's condition did not while the level of haemoglobin in his blood was low with fluid trapped in his chest.

Jalil will have to be on a sugar free diet with low protein and low salt for the rest of his life, Dr Matur said.

"If his kidney can be transplanted then there is a high possibility of being well for long term," said the doctor confidently adding, if the kidney is transplanted then the condition of his heart will also improve and the level of haemoglobin will be increased.

The doctor also said Jalil's diabetes was under control while he was leaving the cabin, but his blood pressure was fluctuating.

On Sunday, a special meeting of the cabinet constituted a five-member medical board with a view to parole the AL general secretary for treatment abroad, if recommended by the board.

After examining Jalil's health from 3.30pm to 5.00pm the same day, the board concluded that the detained AL

Hearing deferred

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ground that they could not fully examine the necessary documents of the case.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Hasina while meeting relatives and her lawyers after adjournment of the court proceedings criticised Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain for acting as a lawyer for the Election Commission while himself being the chief of a political party.

Hasina wondered how being the chief of a political party that is set to take part in the next elections, Kamal Hossain could oppose chief of another party. Hasina also described the role being played by Dr Kamal Hossain in EC's controversial letter inviting BNP to dialogue on political reform as immoral and devoid of political ethics.

Hasina who has been suffering from ailments including eye and hearing problems expressed fear over her deteriorating health. She complained that she was not allowed to meet her personal doctors and junior doctors are offering her treatment.

Hasina also complained of not maintaining jail code in allowing her visitors.

On February 26, the court permitted the defence counsels to examine seized case evidence in presence of the law enforcers following a petition from the defence side.

On the same day, the court deferred the hearing on charge framing for three working days after rejecting a bail prayer of Hasina. The court adjourned the hearing on the ground that senior defence lawyers failed to appear before the court and were involved in another graft case against Hasina in the Supreme Court.

Earlier, the special court deferred the hearing of charge framing five

Crackdown

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Leaders and members of Bangladesh Launch Owners Association and Bangladesh Inland Waterways Passenger Carrier Association (BIWPCA) participated at yesterday's meeting held at the BIWTA office with the chairman of BIWTA in the chair.

The BIWTA chairman said he has reminded the launch owners about their responsibilities and asked them not to engage any untrained master to operate the vessels.

BIWPCA general secretary Siddiqui Rahman Patwari claimed that around 800 members of BIWPCA have proper documents for their vessels.

Means to avoid launch disaster during the upcoming north wester season was also discussed at the meeting, he added.

Officials at Directorate of Shipping said around 4,500 ships and launches have been detected to have proper documents. Over a thousand vessels do not have any registration and fitness documents, they added.

EC invitation

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questioned Bhuiyan's legal capacity to be party to the case, while Sobhan said, "We just want to save our skin, and we have no allegation against anyone."

After submissions from both sides, the bench comprising justices Mirza Hossain Haider and Mamunur Rahman granted the prayer and started hearing arguments on the rule.

Earlier on November 18, an HC bench issued the rule on the commission, Maj (ret'd) Hafiz, six standing committee members and the government, asking them to reply why the EC's invitation letter should not be declared illegal.

On November 5 last year, the commission invited Hafiz to the dialogue slated for November 22. Earlier on October 29, the standing committee appointed M Saifur Rahman and Hafiz as acting chairman and acting secretary general of BNP.

But the EC cancelled its invitation after the HC had stayed operation of the letter. The stay came in response to a writ petition filed by Khaleda Zia challenging the legality of invitation to the Saifur-led faction.

TH Khan yesterday told the court that from reading the standing committee meeting's (October 29) resolution one can be sure that Bhuiyan was indeed expelled by the chairperson.

Besides, he argued, the committee's replacing Khandaker Delwar as the secretary general on health grounds means they acknowledged his appointment by Khaleda.

Furthermore, he said, the BNP constitution does not provide for appointing an acting secretary general.

The lawyer continued that the resolution should be the source of argument here and it says every action at that meeting was against the [BNP] constitution.

Regarding the resolution, he claimed some of the participants in the committee meeting maintain they were given a pre-arranged paper and asked to sign, which they did.

The now detained former prime minister's counsel said he has statements made by affidavit about the whole affair from four of the participants.

More over, he said, the resolution does not say who convened the meeting.

According to the party constitution, only Khaleda Zia has the authority to convene a standing committee meeting, he added.

However, what the BNP constitution has in it is not to be judged by the court, even if it confers absolute he contended.

The court should look at the matter in accordance with the printed materials available.

He reasoned that as the secretary general, Khandaker Delwar has all the right to represent BNP in any dialogue or meeting.

But the EC deprived him of that right and it was unlawful. Above all else, it is a conspiracy to divide the party, he alleged. The chief election commissioner sitting at the Sher-e-Bangla Nagar office wants to destroy BNP, he added.

The two draft ordinances to make laws on city corporations and municipalities are at an advanced stage. The task of preparing another fresh law for districts, upazilas and union parishads is yet to be completed," the CEC said.

About the EC's plan of announcing election schedules for city corporations and municipalities, the LGRD adviser said the laws on the two local government bodies will be ready by that time.

Proteas take series

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was dismissed off the fourth ball of the day to jeopardise his place for the one-day series but another overnight batsman Abdur Razzak made an unbeaten 32 and Shahadat Hossain chipped in with 24 only to ensure that their side would not be bowled out below hundred runs.

Bangladesh were far away from their impressive first Test show, where they were at least competitive for the first two days, in the second match mainly because of their pathetic batting against the fiery South African pace battery, better to say against man-of-the-series Steyn who demolished the Tigers by taking seven wickets, on a flat track.

The Tigers virtually gave up the job without any fight.

It was the third consecutive occasion that young fast bowler Steyn got the man-of-the-series award after two home series triumphs against New Zealand at J West Indies but everybody will remember this Test for the record-breaking opening stand (415) of man-of-the-match Graeme Smith and Mckenzie, who rewrote the record books after 53 years by breaking the previous 413-run stand between Indian pair Vinoo Mankad and Pankaj Roy.

On other hand it was a special match for Mohammad Rafique as the ace left-arm spinner bade bye to international cricket after claiming 100 Test wickets as the first

Info on public

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Under the proposed act, every organisation will have an officer designated to provide information sought by the people.

"Not only the government offices, those including NGOs, trusts and corporate houses like Asia Energy who are registered under any law of the country will have to provide people the information they need," a member of the committee told The Daily Star in return for anonymity.

Asked if the political parties too would be brought within the ambit of the law, he said, "We cannot do that at this moment since they are not registered under any law."

But once the political organisations are registered they will have to do the same, he added.

If an information officer refuses to provide information, or if they dilly-dally or supply incorrect information, the aggrieved person can lodge a complaint with head of the organisation concerned.

Veering from the law commission's proposal for setting up district tribunals to deal with the complaints by those who would be deprived of remedies at the organisation level, the committee has proposed instituting an information commission headquartered in Dhaka to settle such cases.

Hasnat Abdullah

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nine years' imprisonment on charges of tax evasion.

The sentences will be effective from the day of his arrest or surrender, the verdict said. The court also ordered confiscation of his properties worth over Tk 1 crore.

On February 28, the court fixed yesterday for delivering judgment of the case.

ACC Assistant Director Rahela Khatun filed the case with Dhamondi Police Station on September 6 last year accusing Hasnat of acquiring assets worth Tk 1.6 crore beyond his known sources of income and concealing information about his wealth worth Tk 52 lakh.

On January 16, ACC Assistant Director Shafiqul Alam, also the investigation officer of the case, submitted the charge sheet against Hasnat before Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court.

Earlier, a Dhaka court ordered the attachment of Hasnat's properties and issued an arrest warrant against him as he has been on the run since the case was filed.

3 more NGOs

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and houses of the NGO men injuring 30 people including UP Chairman Tofazzal.

Earlier on Sunday, local people confined Latifunnessa, wife of the NGO's executive director Javed Ali, and their son Abd al Latif but released them on condition that 70 percent of the money would be returned by night.

When Javed Ali was returning the money that night, an unruly mob ransacked his house and looted a jute-sack full of money, witnesses said.

About 500 people have been surrounding Naba Jagoroni Unnayan Sangstha office in Saibaria in Puthia since Sunday night hearing the news that director Fazlur Rahman has fled. The NGO collected over Tk 4 crore from 12,000 members through 200 offices in Natore and Rajshahi.

Shyamol Bangla managing director Sadekul Islam and adviser Dulal Sarkar went into hiding with around Tk 1.56 crore collected from 4,500 members.

Some members of Pally Daridra Unnayan Sangstha from Hatianadaha in Singra upazila kidnapped director Abdul Malek from his house at Basila in Naldanga and were on way to Singra. But other members intercepted them and turned Malek in to police. Malek collected about Tk 20 lakh in Hatianadaha and Naldanga.

Members of Samaj Unnayan Sangstha ransacked the house of Abul Hossain at Panditgram in Naldanga as his son was involved with the NGO.

Dhaka supports

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The meeting attended by over 150 people including 12 UP chairmen from the areas concerned, officials and NGO workers blamed district administration and social welfare office for the boom in NGO business.

The meeting decided to alert police across the country to arrest Freedom director Ishaq Mia who disappeared with Tk 250 crore. The district administration will publish his photograph on newspapers and seek help of Interpol, if needed.

The meeting also decided to stop all activities of the NGOs and cancel their registrations. They will recommend to the social welfare department to cancel registration of all such registered NGOs and take legal action against the unregistered ones.

Pvt banks

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prepared by the owners and top officials of private commercial banks, reads.

But BB data show that none of the banks is currently taking the mentioned opening commission of 0.70 percent on letter of credits.

Only two banks charge at a rate of 0.60 percent in the first quarter on letter of credits while rest between 0.40 and 0.50 percent in the first quarter. As per the current system, such charges come down between 0.30 and 0.40 percent from the second quarter.

The banks told the BB officials that the proposed lending rates and service charges would be implemented from the current month.

A team comprising members of Bangladesh Association of Banks (BAB) and Association of Bankers Bangladesh (ABB) submitted the proposal to the central bank Governor Salehuddin Ahmed.

"We got proposals from the bankers and let them implement the new structures," he said adding, "I can't enforce anything on the banks."

"The bankers told me that the proposals are practical and these could be implemented," he said.

Asked about the central bank's reaction on the bankers' proposal, the BB governor said, "Bankers gave some specific proposals and we did not react to those."

"BAB Chairman Nazrul Islam Majumder told reporters that the banks proposed to keep the spread (difference between lending and deposit rates) within 5 percent, which is now 6 percent."

"We will not keep any cap in case of interest rates of deposits, but banks will reduce the interest rates on lending," he said. "We have proposed to keep interest rate on industrial lending highest at 15 percent," he added.

The proposal said non-banking financial institutions and foreign banks should also conduct a similar review.

The banks proposed to reduce interest rates for lending to productive sectors, which shall exclude consumer and card lending. "Due to high distribution, collection and monitoring costs and inadequate/no collateral support we would recommend keeping the ceiling of the SME sector above other productive lending rates," it said.

They also proposed to reduce L/C opening charges to 0.60 percent from 0.80 percent per quarter and set a maximum cap L/C opening charges, where the banks have 100 percent cash margin, at 0.25 percent per quarter which is currently 0.60 percent.

The banks proposed to set a maximum cap for L/C transmission charges of Tk 3000 against current Tk 5000, a cap of Tk 1000 for L/C advising charges against existing Tk 1500, and a cap for amendment advice of Tk 1000 against current Tk 1500.

The suggestions also included setting a cap for arrangement adding confirmation locally of 0.25 percent which is currently 0.25 percent, a cap for Proceeds Realization Certification of Tk 500 which is now Tk 1000, maximum cap of Tk 200 against current Tk 500 for issuance of back-to-back L/C certificate and maximum cap of Tk 200 against current Tk 500 for issuance of C&F certificate.

The banks also proposed to waive several charges fully. Those include foreign correspondence charges (local component) of Tk 1500, charges for endorsement of

Govt wants

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in principle to hold the long overdue upazila parishad polls and the government wants it before parliamentary elections.

"The upazila elections can be held before the parliamentary elections. However, we have yet to decide when the polls will take place," CEC Huda said.

Asked about the objections raised by major political parties about holding polls to local government bodies before parliamentary elections, the LGRD adviser said the EC would decide in this regard.

In response to a similar query, the CEC said the EC in its electoral roadmap announced on July 15 declared that it would hold polls to local government bodies.

"And we have been repeatedly saying that we will follow the electoral roadmap. We have decided not to hold polls to union parishads since holding polls to around 5,000 union parishads is a mammoth task," the CEC said.

In the electoral roadmap, the EC announced that upazila parishad elections, which have not been held in 17 years, would be held at any time between November and December this year.

During the second round of electoral reform talks with the EC, between February 24 and 28, most political parties opposed the EC's plan to hold polls to local government bodies before parliamentary elections.

Govt to let

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He said the government will consider if the detained former prime ministers cannot get adequate treatment in the country.

"It is for sure that the government thinks they need treatment, it will not hesitate to send them abroad," the advisers said.

When the issue of sending Abdul Jalil abroad for better treatment was brought to the government's attention, it immediately took all necessary steps to send him off, he said.

He also underscored the need for modernising the health care system in the country to reduce dependency on foreign countries for better treatment.

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