

Hasina fit enough

FROM PAGE 1
Sanowar Hossain also said some new symptoms have developed in her eyes.

Earlier in the day, the court set March 30 for hearing the counsels defending the AL chief and seven others on whether charges should be framed against them of graft in awarding the contract of setting up a barge-mounted power plant in Khulna.

The case was filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) last year.

The prosecution completed their submissions on March 9, after adjournment of the hearing proceedings on seven occasions.

The jail authorities in its statement included a medical report by the Square Hospital describing Hasina's present health status as fine.

The court saw a heated debate following submission of the health report that the defence said was "false, fabricated and motivated to tarnish the public image of the AL president".

Earlier on March 17, the court expressed dissatisfaction and surprise over hospitalisation of the former premier without its knowledge, and asked for an explanation of the action.

In the report, the prisons authorities apologised to the court for the "unintended mistake" over Hasina's admission to hospital. Considering her social status and wishes, they had her admitted to the Square Hospital on March 11 on suggestions from her personal physicians.

The report added that she is in fine condition and going through a few more medical examinations.

It said physically she is quite okay, but she does not want to attend the proceedings and that was why the jail officials failed to produce her before the court.

The court sat at 11:30am shortly after the report from the jail authorities reached. Of the eight accused, former energy secretary Dr Toufik-e-Elahi Chowdhury was present.

Syed Ahsan Habib Shamim, assistant public prosecutor, read out the report. The prosecution said Hasina must be produced before the court.

They also asked if her health condition was fine then why she was allowed to be at hospital and why she needed some more medical tests.

Over the claim of her unwillingness to show up, the judge said, "It is something new that the court is facing".

The defence questioned authenticity of the report and sought permission for lawyers and relatives of the defendant to meet her. The court said since proceedings are being hampered for her reluctance to appear, it would have to fix a date for hearing on charge framing first.

Hasina's lawyers said why they should trust the report when none of her relatives, lawyers and personal physicians was allowed to meet her in the last 13 days.

"The report arouses suspicions and doubt," they observed, adding that they fear her life might be in danger.

"We are afraid a conspiracy is on to push our client to death," said Advocate Kamrul Islam. As he continued arguments in a high-pitched voice, the court at one stage said, "It is a court of law. You cannot deliver a speech that you usually do at a political meeting."

"You all are attending as her counsel, not leader."

Judge Firoz Alam continued, "We could not begin the trial yet due to time petitions by both the sides and non-production of the accused."

"And now I see the accused is not willing to appear."

He said, "At present, the court has two documents in hand—a statement from the jail authorities and a report from the Square Hospital. You might have apprehension in mind but this court has no suspicion at this moment."

The court also observed that its main task is to hear the case. The matters relating to meeting with relatives, doctors and lawyers are

AL threatens

FROM PAGE 16
At 5:00 pm, was held to protest the arrest of the AL chief and demand her unconditional release for better treatment. It was the first protest of its kind since the state of emergency has been declared in the country. And the harshest tone taken by AL since.

Presidium member Suranjit Sengupta gave the government a week's time to let the people know if they will walk the path of democracy. If not, he warned that AL would be forced to take a decision about what to do next.

AL acting president Zillur Rahman, acting general secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam, Presidium members Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzak Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta, organising secretaries Saber Hossain Chowdhury and Abdul Mannan and other top officials of the party were present at the time.

Zillur Rahman pointed out that AL had faced many problems in the country in the past but never like what they face at present. He said that only Sheikh Hasina could help lead the nation out of the present crisis.

Tofail Ahmed directed all the front organisations of the party to make all out preparations for movements in the coming days.

Other leaders echoed him and also demanded Sheikh Hasina's unconditional release for treatment. They also expressed hope for free and fair polls in the country.

The AL leaders also criticised the way the government has handled Sheikh Hasina's treatment.

just privileges it grants to the accused. It said, "You will have the privileges as per the law."

Just when the judge was about to deliver orders, Kamrul said, "Why are you avoiding the prayer I have submitted?"

Angered, Judge Firoz replied, "The court is not bound to hear a matter at the time you submit [that]. It will be heard later."

"I want the accused to be present here first and only then will hear the other matters. It is more important for the court to be relieved of anxiety over the state of the accused than relieving you," he said addressing the lawyer.

In response to the defence complaining that many of the court's earlier orders were not followed, the judge said, "Let the court take its proper course of action. Have patience. All its orders would definitely be carried out."

BRIEFING AT HOSPITAL
Prof. Sanowar said the Square Hospital has some limitations in treating the AL leader's ear problems, and a final report would be given after further examination in this regard.

He said the doctors think Hasina needs to be under supervision for some more time and she should have a number of other tests. To say something definitive about the latest symptoms, doctors need around 10 days.

Her blood pressure has been normal and allergy contained, he noted, adding that her hearing problem however remains unchanged.

The panel chief said Hasina is now doing well. He however declined to comment when asked whether she was fit enough to appear at the court.

Earlier on Thursday, Dr Sarwar-e-Alam told the newsmen that the medical team formed to examine her health would make its formal recommendations to the jail authorities by yesterday (Sunday).

Emon remanded

FROM PAGE 16
with illegal arms trading and currency smuggling. Emon was placed on remand in an arms case while Isahaq in a currency smuggling case.

Meanwhile, the court also granted a four-day remand for Emon after Detective Branch (DB) of Police prayed for his custody in remand. The DB wants to interrogate him in connection with the murder of former vice-chancellor Prof Aftab Ahmad.

Emon is expected to be handed over to DB after his remand period with CID expires.

However, CID sources said they would seek fresh remand for Emon to interrogate him in connection with the killing of BNP leader Liaquat.

Sources said the CID is verifying the information provided by Emon regarding the "criminal activities" of former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar and recently suspended sub-inspector Sanwar Hossain, who was working as liaison inspector for Bangladesh Rifles in Rajshahi region.

The sources said Rajshahi superintendent of police directed Sanwar to report to the CID office in Dhaka and he has been staying at the CID office.

OMS dealers

FROM PAGE 1
government expert consultative meeting talked about various urgent interventions, UNB reports.

The decision to increase the sale of rice under OMS would not create any problem for food stock as the country now has six lakh tonnes of food in storage," he said.

Meanwhile, the import of four lakh tonnes of rice from India hangs in the balance since the two countries could not strike the deal yesterday. Yesterday's scheduled meeting on the import between the director general (DG) of food and Indian negotiators did not take place due to unknown reasons.

An Indian negotiator, however, told The Daily Star that the foreign ministries of the countries have already exchanged views on the issue and both the governments' highest levels are to decide now.

"Probably, this is why today's [Sunday's] meeting was not held," the negotiator said.

Talking to The Daily Star DG Pius Costa said the decision to import rice from India is now depending on the highest level of the government but the negotiations will continue.

He said the first consignment of 1 lakh tonnes of rice has started arriving in the country. At least 35,000 tonnes are expected to arrive within the 30th of this month, he added.

He said rice import was hampered for two to three days due to holidays in India but the flow would resume from today.

Bangladesh is importing the rice at \$399 per tonne after India promised the export of 5 lakh tonnes of rice to Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, around 3,000 rice-laden trucks, imported by the private sector, are stranded in Petrapole, the Indian side of Benapole Land Port, for 19 days, reports our Benapole correspondent. The delay was due to a deadlock in the negotiations of the prices of rice.

Rice traders in Dhaka claimed yesterday that rice prices remained unchanged at both wholesale and retail markets.

Wholesalers said Swarna and Ratna varieties of rice were selling at Tk 1,200 and Tk 1,250 per maund, 37.32kg. Local varieties of coarse rice were selling between Tk 1,140 and Tk 1,200 per maund.

At the retail level, coarse varieties of rice were selling between Tk 32 and Tk 35 per kg yesterday while the finer varieties were selling between Tk 36 and Tk 42 kg, the traders said.

85 more killed

FROM PAGE 16
The government claims it has killed 2,322 rebels since January against the loss of 136 of its own troops. Colombo allows no journalists or rights groups into the embattled regions, making it impossible to verify the figures.

Thousands of people have been killed in a new wave of fighting since December 2005, when a Norwegian-brokered truce began to unravel. The truce was formally ended by the government in January.

The rebels have been battling for an independent homeland since 1972 in an ethnic conflict that has claimed tens of thousands of lives.

Cabinet okays

FROM PAGE 1
placed by the Local Government Division.

A regular weekly meeting of the council with Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed in the chair took the decision.

The council meeting asked for placing those ordinances before the council again as soon as possible after vetting by the law ministry for final approval.

The meeting also approved amendment to the Bar Council Temporary Rules (Ordinance 2007).

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim briefed newsmen about the outcome of the advisory council meeting.

Members of the Advisory Council attended the meeting at the CA's office. Cabinet secretary and secretaries concerned were also present.

Dhaka-Kolkata

FROM PAGE 1
The date will be announced officially after an agreement between the railway officials of the two countries. It is expected to be signed during a three-day bilateral talk in Dhaka beginning on April 1, said communications ministry officials.

"We are aiming to start the Dhaka-Kolkata passenger train service from Pahela Baishakh... You see, our rail minister has already announced the date in the parliament," Indian High Commissioner Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty said yesterday while replying to a reporter's query at the communications ministry.

He was talking to reporters after a meeting with Communications Adviser Maj Gen (ret'd) Ghulam Quader.

Infrastructural works that are yet to be completed would be finished within a short time, he hoped.

Responding to a query, he said fences near no man's land would not create any problem in launching the rail service. "We have already reached an agreement on this."

Pinak hoped that people of the two countries would benefit once the train service connecting the capitals of Bangladesh and West Bengal is launched.

"There are still some unfinished tasks, but we hope those will be finished by Pahela Baishakh," Communications Secretary Mahbubur Rahman told reporters.

"We have already done two trial runs and found no problems. Let's start the service; we can address problems if they come up," he said.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, he said, "There should be no reason for delaying the train service."

Bangladesh has set up the immigration centre in Darsana, Chudanga for the time being, he said. "The Railway is preparing the budget for setting up the centre near the international border," he added.

Bangladesh would also construct fences near zero line of the border and construction work will start after the budget for it is approved, the communications secretary added.

The two-way passenger train would run once a week.

St Martin

FROM PAGE 16
numbers have gone down alarmingly.

Coastal and Wetland Biodiversity Management Project (CWBMP) has undertaken a project to preserve two endangered species of the turtles—Green Turtle and Olive Ridley Turtle -- by keeping the sea beach undisturbed.

Steps have been taken to collect the turtle eggs and put them in a newly constructed hatchery.

The CWBMP has engaged Bangladesh POUH, a local NGO, in keeping parts of the beaches off limits to people where turtles usually come to lay eggs. The initiative bars tourists from lighting campfire along the beaches or using flashlights at night so that turtles could safely lay eggs.

POUH has employed 17 guards full-time in order to ensure that turtles return to the sea safely after laying eggs. The guards then collect the eggs and put them in the hatchery.

Under the supervision of Dr Tapan Kumar Ghoshal, the POUH guards have so far collected over 5,335 eggs. During the last 14 months, over 2,200 hatchlings were released into the sea.

Dr Ghoshal said once the beach is secured against intruding tourists and dogs, turtles in increased numbers would again take the St Martin's beaches as their natural breeding ground.

Paribagh, Begunbari

FROM PAGE 16
Several hundred SSC examinees living in the slum brought out a procession in the area demanding suspension of the eviction drive until the SSC examinations are over.

The BSMMU authorities, however, could not recover another 16 decimals of encroached land, occupied by several high-rise structures, due to two separate court injunctions.

The construction of the buildings on the encroached BSMMU land went on unabated as the BSMMU authorities did not resist it in time, alleged sources.

Prof MA Mannan, chairman of Property Recovery Committee of BSMMU, told The Daily Star, "We cannot remove them as there are court injunctions. However, we are continuing our battle [in court] against the injunctions."

Parts of the buildings, however, have been constructed on BSMMU land and the remainder on land belonging to the building owners, he added.

Commenting on BSMMU employees' involvement in building and renting out slums on the encroached land, he said, "It has been to our knowledge that some BSMMU staff had been collecting rentals from the slum dwellers."

Witnesses said nearly 100 workers hired by the BSMMU authorities conducted the eviction drive since the morning in presence of a magistrate and around 50 police personnel.

Sources said influential BSMMU employees, with the connivance of some staff members had built the shanties and tin-roofed houses for rental purposes.

Evicted slum dweller Aleya Begum, 60, from Natore, told The Daily Star, "My family had been living here for the last 10 years. I've been paying Tk 1,600 rental [per month] to BSMMU staff lot."

"The BSMMU authorities announced about the eviction two

days ago, but we were doubtful if the eviction would take place at all since several similar instructions in the past were never carried out."

According to sources, a number of the fourth-class employees of the BSMMU who are involved in the rental business on the encroached land now own buildings and flats elsewhere.

RAJUK DRIVE AT BEGUNBARI
Rajuk authorities yesterday demolished over 600 shanties at the Begunbari slum, rendering hundreds of dwellers homeless.

The Rajuk authorities with the help of police conducted the drive from 10:00am till 5:00pm, said police.

A heart-rending situation arose in the slum area when the slum dwellers started to cry and request Rajuk officials not to destroy their homes.

A number of slum dwellers alleged that the Rajuk authorities did not inform them of the date of the drive beforehand.

Rebutting the allegation, Rajuk officials claimed that they had served notice regarding the eviction drive five days ago.

The evicted inhabitants couldn't help but watch their belongings being destroyed before their very eyes while a large number of police stood on guard.

Moenen

FROM PAGE 16
Faiz said that he heard the news from university Proctor AKA Feroz yesterday afternoon.

He will speak to the hall provost regarding the issue today, he added.

However, hall Provost Prof Aminur Rahman Majumder could not be contacted over phone despite frequent attempts.

The president expressed satisfaction at the activities of the army.

Military Secretary to the president Maj Gen Mohd Aminul Karim, secretary to President's Office M Sirajul Islam and President's Press Secretary Abdul Awal Howlader were present.

SCBA firm on polls

FROM PAGE 1
necessary to take its prior permission for holding the election.

The outgoing leaders of the association and election candidates urged all Supreme Court lawyers at the meeting to make the election as perched under a success.

Barrister Amir told The Daily Star that all senior lawyers concurred at the meeting that as per the EPR there is no necessity for taking any prior permission for holding the election.

In the EPR, the restriction is put on bringing out processions and rallies only, the lawyers said.

Holding the election is an internal affair of the Supreme Court. So, the government has no authority to give any decision regarding this, they observed at the meeting.

"Based on the senior advocates' opinions, the SCBA decided to send the DMP a letter informing that prior permission is not necessary for holding the election," said Amir.

In reply to a question, he said allowing the SCBA to hold the election now depends on the government. "All is set to hold the election. The 30-member election commission is also ready to hold the election," he added.

THE DMP LETTER
The letter signed by DMP Additional Police Commissioner Shamsunnahar on behalf of the commissioner was sent to the SCBA secretary.

In the letter, the DMP said it came to know that preparations are going on for holding the SCBA election on March 24.

According to the EPR 2007, there is a provision for taking prior permission from the DMP commis-

Release Khaleda

FROM PAGE 1
When asked whether the BNP would announce any agitation programmes if Khaleda does not get bail before the Independence Day, he said party leaders would take decision in this regard but added that they still hope that the BNP chief would be freed.

"People want her release from jail as all the cases filed against her are false and fabricated," he added.

The letter also called for the release of other BNP leaders and workers including its Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman and his younger brother Arafat Rahman Koko.

The decision to demand in writing the release of "political prisoners" was taken Thursday at a meeting of the senior BNP leaders and its front-organisation leaders.

"Khaleda Zia has been shown arrested in a fabricated case. The authorities could not prove any allegations against her either," reads the letter.

It described Khaleda as the chairperson of the largest political party in Bangladesh and said she was elected as prime minister for three times and was also a successful opposition leader.

"She played an extraordinary role in establishing parliamentary democracy in the country," the letter said adding that Bangladesh established itself as an emerging economic tiger during Khaleda's time in office and as such, it is against humanity to keep her in jail for long.

Earlier, the Awami League submitted a letter to the chief adviser demanding the release of party President Sheikh Hasina.

Manju

FROM PAGE 16
In the wealth statement submitted to the ACC.

Manju's wife Tasmina was made an accused in the case for abetting her husband.

On June 26, Manju was sentenced to five years' simple imprisonment and fined Tk 10,000 for possessing 21 bottles of liquor at his Dhanmondir residence.

CASES AGAINST QUADER
ACC Assistant Director Mohammad Taleb Rahman, also the IO of the cases, yesterday submitted the charge sheets to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka showing 24 people in each case as prosecution witnesses in the cases filed against AL Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader.

On September 30 last year, ACC Assistant Director Ashrafur Islam filed the cases with Paltan Police Station against Quader, also former state minister for youth, sports and cultural affairs, on charges of taking Tk 1.41 crore in bribe from bidders on different dates.

In the cases, the complainant said the AL leader while at the helm of the ministry took bribes to help bidders win tender of different development activities under National Sports Council.

In the cases, the complainant mentioned that Obaidul Quader took Tk 37 lakh, Tk 57 lakh and Tk 47 lakh from three contractors on different dates between January 1, 1999 and September 3, 2001.

DU int'l hall

FROM PAGE 16
Faiz said that he heard the news from university Proctor AKA Feroz yesterday afternoon.

He will speak to the hall provost regarding the issue today, he added.

However, hall Provost Prof Aminur Rahman Majumder could not be contacted over phone despite frequent attempts.

Power Cell

FROM PAGE 16
international procurement practice". The IFC says that while a detailed letter is also unusual, it was far more common than meetings.

The Power Cell had a meeting yesterday and the IFC sent two representatives on its behalf to cell yesterday finally decided to send Summit a letter explaining the causes of the rejection.

"Clearly the cell cannot make its own decisions. It is the IFC which is deciding everything for the cell," said a source.

The Bibiyana tender will now have only three competitors and Sirajganj just two.

In the Bibiyana project, the cell pre-qualified US companies AES and Chevron (which also operates the Bibiyana Gas Field), Korean Kepco, Malaysian Powertek along with Siemens and "conditionally" qualified Summit and disqualified Malaysian YTL on grounds of small differences. In the Sirajganj project, the cell pre-qualified just AES, Kepco and Powertek last month.

Interestingly, soon after this pre-qualification, Kepco and Powertek on February 11 announced that they would merge and bid as one, thus shrinking the competition in Bibiyana and Sirajganj. On February 14, the cell finally disqualified Summit in the Bibiyana project.

The cell's February letter noted that Summit was designated as a conditionally qualified bidder because its financial statements were not prepared in accordance with the International Accounting Standards (IAS).

The cell on December 4 named four auditors and asked Summit to have its financials audited as per the tender rule by employing any of the four auditors. The audited financial statement should reach the cell before January 15.

The Bibiyana tender requires that a bidding company's net financial value would be more than \$100 million. Summit accordingly submitted its audited financial statement complying with the IAS within the deadline. Even though the auditor puts Summit's net financial value at more than \$121 million, the cell arbitrarily puts its own financial evaluation at only \$32.5 million. The cell termed the company "non-qualified bidder".

Gilani was named on Saturday by Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party as its candidate for prime minister, more than a month after the PPP won the most seats in general elections.

Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, political adviser to former prime minister Khaleda Zia, was sent to Sylhet Jail punitively from Kashipur Jail, and former housing minister Mirza Abbas was sent back to Dhaka Central Jail from Apollo Hospital for same reasons.

The jail authorities earlier also seized mobile phones from the possessions of imprisoned former state minister Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Sigma Huda, wife of Nazmul Huda, Sabera Aman, wife of Aman Ullah Aman, and Khushnud Lobi, wife of former lawmaker Ali Asgar Lobi.

Following detection of quite widespread use of mobile phones by prisoners in violation of the jail code, the government decided to install cellphone jammers at all 67 prisons across the country.

A low range cellphone jammer was installed at Dhaka Central Jail experimentally about a month ago. In the first phase, the jammers will be installed at all 12 central jails, and the rest of the jails will get them gradually.

Meanwhile, Falu and former Jamaat lawmaker Abdullah Mohammad Taher were sent back to Dhaka Central Jail from BSMMU, as doctors there had said they do not need hospitalization any longer.

New 'Mr No' of Pakistan

FROM PAGE 1
risk of bringing a defiant person to the office of prime minister who may one day say no even to him.

Zardari remembers that Gilani said no to his leader Benazir Bhutto twice when he was Speaker of the National Assembly from 1993 to 1996. Gillani issued the production orders of some opposition MPs in 1994 who were in jail. Prime Minister Benazir was not ready to implement the orders of her own Speaker. She wanted to punish Sheikh Rashid Ahmad who used filthy language against her many times. Gilani took a stand. He argued that his orders must be implemented, otherwise he will resign from the post. Finally his orders were implemented.

Next year opposition parties led by Nawaz Sharif scuffled with the treasury bench during the speech of President Farooq Leghari at the joint session of the parliament. Benazir sent her Attorney General Qazi Jamil to Gilani with the message that the Speaker must register a case with police against the opposition MPs for attacking the president.

Gilani politely declined it but the attorney general insisted again and again. Finally Gilani asked the attorney general to leave his office. He told the prime minister that he would not preside over the National Assembly as a protest. The resulting crisis lasted for 20 days.

The Intelligence Bureau reported to Bhutto that Speaker Gilani was in contact with opposition parties and hatching a conspiracy to become prime minister. Benazir sent that report to Gilani. He returned the file with the note that only time would prove his loyalty to the party. After that Benazir accepted Gilani's point of view and the crisis was resolved.

Benazir was impressed with the loyalty and courage of Gilani when he was arrested before the election of 2002. Tariq Aziz, a close aide of President Musharraf, visited him at Rawalpindi Central Jail and offered him release from jail in return for changing his loyalty but Gilani snubbed his offer. After the 2002 election many government officials visited him