

Hasina fit enough

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

Eardier 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 Toufique-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 a 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 taken by AL since.

AL threatens

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am to 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 Suranjan 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 Ashraful Islam, Presidium members Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzak Tofigh Ahmed, Suranjan 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.

Tofigh Ahmed directed all the front organisations of the party to make all our 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 fair and fair pols in the country.

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

85 more killed

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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.

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

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placed by the Local Government Division.

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

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with illegal arms trading and currency smuggling. Emon was placed on remand in an arms case while Ishaq 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 Liqat.

Sources said the CID is verifying the information provided by Emon regarding the "criminal activities" of former state minister for home Lutfuzzaman 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

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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.

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 added.

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

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 Plus Costa said the decision to import rice from India is now depending on the highest level of the government but the negotiations will continue.

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Paribagh, Begunbari

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.

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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."

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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 Litton."

"The BSMMU authorities announced about the eviction two

Manju

FROM PAGE 16

in the wealth statement submitted to the ACC.

Manju's wife Taslima 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 Dhannondi residence.

CASES AGAINST QUADER

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.

Rebuking 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.

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New 'Mr No' of Pakistan

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risk of bringing a defiant person to the office of prime minister who may one day say no even to his offer.

Zardari remembers that Gilani said no to his leader Benazir Bhutto twice when he was Speaker of the National Assembly from 1993 to 1996. Gilani 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 scuttled 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.

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

DU int'l hall

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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.

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.

Moeen

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