

Unite within 72 hours for talks with EC

BNP groups get ultimatum; Khaleda loyals agree to sit together with Saifur faction if Delwar invited by EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) in an unprecedented move yesterday asked the BNP factions to be reconciled within the next 72 hours to participate in the dialogue on electoral reforms proposals.

In response, the ones loyal to Khaleda Zia demanded that the EC first send a formal invitation to their Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain. They said within 72 hours after the receipt of an

invite they would patch up differences with the pro-reform leaders and take part in the talks together.

"We have asked them to come together for discussions on electoral reforms. We've given them the next two to three days to be united. We can't wait any longer," Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda told reporters after meeting the two groups separately yesterday.

He said both the factions have assured the commission that they

would unite again. "We want to sit with a united BNP. We can't handle this faction thing," he added.

Talking to newsmen, BNP chairperson's Adviser Brig Gen (retd) Hannan Shah said they have asked the EC for an invitation letter to Khandaker Delwar, secretary general appointed by the chairperson.

"We have assured the CEC and the other two election commissioners that we would participate in the talks together within 72 hours after receiving a formal

invitation," he continued. "We hope the commission will consider our proposal."

Since independence, no EC had to mediate internal dispute of a political party. But, officials at the EC Secretariat observed, the present one is compelled to intervene as the leadership row within BNP threatens to undermine its electoral roadmap.

At the meetings with the factions, the commission said it wants

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HASINA TRIAL
Proceedings stop for 2 hours over cop excesses

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Proceedings of the barge-mounted power plant graft case against detained Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina remained adjourned for the first two hours yesterday as the lawyers protested against rude behaviour by a police officer to journalists.

As the journalists continued their courtroom boycott for the second day yesterday, the former premier expressed suspicion that she might be put on a "camera trial" in absence of the press.

The journalists, however, called off their programme at 1:30pm after DC (prosecution) Akkas Uddin Bhuiyan and Additional

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Saifur admitted to hospital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Acting chairperson of the pro-reforms BNP faction M Saifur Rahman was admitted to Apollo Hospitals in the city yesterday afternoon.

He was being treated by Dr Azizul Hasan, consultant of the internal medicine department, for a drop in mineral level in his body.

He was, however, out of danger, hospital sources said.

Khaleda loyals sit with govt today

Delwar claims of positive nod from detained chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The pro-Khaleda faction of BNP yesterday decided to join the pre-dialogue talks, to be held any time today, with advisers of the government.

A text message from Education and Commerce Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman was sent yesterday

to Khandaker Delwar Hossain, BNP secretary general appointed by Chairperson Khaleda Zia, inviting the faction to join the discussions at 5:00pm the same day, but the schedule was deferred till today by request of the faction.

Following the invitation, leaders of the faction called an emergency

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ACC forms task force to probe graft at BSMMU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday said a three-member task force has been formed to look into institutional corruption in Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

The team will investigate the irregularities in the purchase and supply of equipment to BSMMU and in the tender processes to determine the loss caused by graft.

"The task force will begin its

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NATIONAL WOMEN DEVELOPMENT POLICY Review body opposes equal rights for women

Recommends deletion of 6 provisions, change in 15

STAR REPORT

The ulama committee formed to review the National Women Development Policy has strongly opposed equal rights to women, recommending deletion of six sections of the policy and amending 15 others as they said these sections "clash" with the provisions of the Quran and Sunnah.

There are several sections in the policy which are "very objectionable", said Mufti Mohammad Nuruddin, acting khatib of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque who headed the review committee.

"A woman cannot enjoy rights equal to a man's because a woman is not equal to a man by birth. Can

there be two prime ministers—one male and one female—in a country at the same time?" Nuruddin told The Daily Star after submitting the seven-page report to Law and Religious Affairs Adviser AF Hassan Arif yesterday.

The 20-member committee asked the government to clarify the

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DU teachers wear black badge to demand lifting of emergency

DU CORRESPONDENT

A large number of Dhaka University (DU) teachers yesterday wore black ribbons to classes and examination halls demanding immediate withdrawal of the state of emergency.

Teachers of the pro-Awami League Blue Panel and pro-BNP-Jamaat White Panel were seen wearing black ribbons at classes in Arts building and Business Studies faculty and other institutions of the university.

Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) on April 13 decided on this protest programme during a general meeting held at the association's club.

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PHOTO STAR

A teacher of Dhaka University takes class wearing a black badge yesterday. A large number of teachers wore black ribbons in demand for immediate withdrawal of the state of emergency.

Rice supply for OMS increased

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The almost unmanageable rush to buy rice from Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) outlets in the capital is now under control as the number of outlets increased and people's fear of not getting rice in future died down.

Meanwhile, the government decided to increase the amount of rice for open market sale (OMS) dealers. BDR Task Force Commander Col Md Mujibul Hoque yesterday said, "The rush for rice has died down. People who were scared are now calm finding rice available."

He was speaking at a views-exchange meeting at the BDR Headquarters yesterday.

"During the last few days,

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Tofail sees no alternative to movement if Hasina not freed now

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League (AL) presidium member Tofail Ahmed yesterday warned that there would be no alternative to waging movement if former prime minister Sheikh Hasina is not released from jail immediately.

Speaking at a discussion on the historic Mujibnagar Day, he urged the AL leaders, workers and supporters to prepare themselves for the movement which might be

called for any time to free Hasina.

The Awami Jubo League, youth front of the party, organised the discussion at the AL's central office on Bangabandhu Avenue. Jubo League presidium member Prof Mujibur Rahman presided over the discussion.

Tofail said the country is now going through a critical time and Hasina's release is the only way to overcome it.

He demanded that the government hold parliamentary elections

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Treatment of Hasina abroad not in govt's mind: Matin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Adviser Maj Gen (retd) MA Matin yesterday said right now the government is not considering the issue of sending detained former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina abroad for treatment.

"Since hearing of the cases against Sheikh Hasina is going on, the government is not considering the matter of sending her abroad for treatment," Matin told the

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WOMEN POLICY
Govt to take tough stance on violence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government would take a tough stance against any further violence centring the National Women Development Policy.

"We have shown enough tolerance since religious sentiment is linked with it. But, it would be wrong if anyone considered it as a weakness of the government. We will become tough if needed," Home Adviser Maj Gen (retd) MA Matin said at a press briefing last night.

"We will try to prevent any violence the next time. After all the emergency is there," Matin said, revealing the government's stance on the issue following last week's

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ILL-GOTTEN WEALTH

Ex-PSC member Prof Mahfuz gets 13yrs

Tk 5cr property to be confiscated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special court yesterday sentenced former Public Service Commission (PSC) member Prof Mahfuzur Rahman to 13 years imprisonment for amassing wealth illegally and concealing information in wealth statement submitted to the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC).

Mahfuzur was also fined Tk 50 lakh, in default of which he will have to serve two more years in jail. The court also ordered confiscation of his ill-gotten property worth Tk 5.02 crore by the state.

Judge AKM Arifur Rahman of

the Special Court-10, set up on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises for dealing with corruption cases, delivered the judgment.

Mahfuzur is absconding and was tried in absentia. The punishment will come into effect from the day of his arrest or surrender, the verdict said.

The court sentenced him to three years jail for concealing information about wealth worth Tk 1,82,000 in the wealth statement and 10 years rigorous imprisonment for amassing wealth worth Tk 5.02 crore beyond his known sources of income.

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11 JMB men get life for sedition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A Rajshahi divisional court yesterday awarded life terms to all 11 militants of Jama'ul Mujahidin, Bangladesh (JMB) in a sedition case filed for taking combat training to fight against the state in 2005.

Judge M Sajedul Karim of the first court of Rajshahi divisional special judge also fined the accused Tk 20,000 each, in default of which they are to spend two more years in jail.

The convicts include Enamul Haque and Golamur Rahman alias Golam Mostafa, both regional JMB commanders and followers of executed militant leader Siddikul Islam Bangla Bhai and arrested militant kingpin Asadullah Al Galib respectively.

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NIKO GRAFT CASE
Ex-secretary Shahidul held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law enforcers arrested former acting energy secretary Khandaker Shahidul Islam last night in connection with the Niko corruption case filed on December 9 last year.

Sources said a team comprising members of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and police arrested Shahidul at his Dhanmondi-27 residence at about 8:00pm.

Shahidul was handed over to Dhanmondi police at about 8:30pm.

The ACC filed the case with

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PHOTO STAR

Leaders of pro-Khaleda faction of BNP, top, and pro-reforms faction, bottom, meet election commissioners at separate dialogue preparatory meetings at the EC Secretariat yesterday following invitations of the Election Commission.



Mr. Mahiuddin Faruqi, Managing Director, Multifabs Limited is receiving a Crest of Janata Bank Limited from Mr. Suhel Ahmed Choudhury, Chairman, Board of Directors Janata Bank Limited in recognition of their receipt of National Export Trophy (Gold) for the year 2004-2005. Mr. S M Aminur Rahman, CEO and Managing Director of Janata Bank Limited was also present on the occasion.