

Hasina denied bail

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Sangsad Bhaban complex around 10.00am. Two other accused in the case -- former power secretary Dr Toufique-e-Elahi Chowdhury and former state minister for power Rafiqul Islam -- were also produced before the court.

The court also turned down a bail petition by a counsel for Rafiqul Islam on the same grounds. The counsel, Syed Rezaur Rahman, made a plea for Rafiqul's bail saying he is undergoing treatment at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) for diabetes, asthma and cardiac problems.

The prosecution strongly opposed Rafiqul's bail prayer.

Opposing the defence plea for time, the prosecution said relevant papers and documents relating to the Niko case are available every day during court hours for examination by defence counsels.

So, there is no reason for granting time extension, and the hearing should start today (Thursday), they argued.

Later, talking to newsmen, defence lawyers said there is no criminal offence in this case, and the government has vindictively filed it to harass Hasina.

Terming the case 'ridiculous', advocate Quamrul Islam said the

then premier Hasina had only approved a draft policy, which did not cause any loss to the government or the country.

They would soon move to the High Court in consultation with other senior lawyers, he said.

The defence lawyers also said Hasina is eligible for bail since she is sick, and aged. Moreover, one of the charge-sheeted accused in the case has been granted bail, so she also should get bail, they added.

Quamrul quoted Hasina as saying, "Although we are talking about independence of the judiciary, it is not independent. Judges do not have independence, and they are doing what they have been asked to do."

On December 9 last year, ACC Deputy Director MM Sabbir Hasan filed the case with Tejgaon Police Station.

On May 7 this year, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) pressed charges against Hasina and the eight others.

The charge sheet mentions that the deal was given to Niko in an illegal way without floating tenders, allowing it to extract 1,794 billion cubic feet (bcf) gas from a reserve of 2,834 bcf. And this caused the country a loss of Tk 13,630.50 crore on the basis of the then price of gas.

AL plans

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extended meetings across the country to prepare the ground for tougher movements in the coming days.

"We will be fully prepared for both the election and a movement," AL Organising Secretary and Hasina's Political Secretary Sabir Hossain Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

"We will make maximum organisational preparations so that we can immediately implement the party decision on whether to launch movements or take part in the elections," he said.

Meanwhile, the AL is yet to take any decision on whether to participate in the dialogue or elections without the party chief who has been detained since July 16 last year.

Hectic negotiations have been going on between the authorities concerned and Hasina recently to have a way out for her release to ensure her participation in the dialogue and the election.

Both Hasina and her party want her unconditional release, but different sources said the government wants to release her on parole or by other conditional means.

But before making such preparations the AL will gradually prepare the ground for movements through organising the party across the country.

Many AL leaders think if the government does not pay any heed to their demands, there would be no alternative to going for the movement.

"We will have to take the path of movement if the government does not take appropriate measures to make the dialogue successful and hold a free and fair election by realising our six-point demand," AL Organising Secretary Mahmudur Rahman Mannat told The Daily Star.

To warm up preparation, and also as part of its movement, the AL starts the mass signature collection tomorrow across the country except Dhaka. It will submit the signatures to the local administration to press home its demands.

AL Commerce and Industry Secretary Col (ret) Faruk Khan said, "We will organise people so that they remain fully prepared for both the movement and elections. We will also direct our leaders at the grassroots level to strengthen the party's organisational capacity."

Several groups of all central leaders will visit the party's district and upazila units during June 15-30 and give their grassroots level leaders necessary directions regarding the movement and the election.

"We will discuss how to strengthen the organisational capacity across the country and make these programmes successful through people's mass involvement with our programmes," another AL Organising Secretary Akhtaruzzaman told The Daily Star.

However, many AL leaders think that the party does not have the organisational capacity right now to go for tougher movement. The anxiety has increased in the face of the government's countrywide crackdown. These party leaders think that it would be tough for them to make these kinds of political programmes successful.

"Mass people's involvement is a must to start the movement in the present context," AL Publicity Secretary Asaduzzaman Noor told The Daily Star.

To strengthen organisational activities, the AL will also complete formation of committees for the party's district and upazila units that presently have no party structure. It has already directed the grassroots level leaders to form their committees before the party's movement for Hasina's release begins.

1,679 more held

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to 86 and 55.

A police headquarters press release said police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized the arms, ammunition and explosives in Mymensingh, Rangpur, Pabna, Jhenidah, Patuakhali, Sylhet, Dhaka, Rajshahi, Khulna, Chittagong and Sirajgonj.

Menon warns

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at a city hotel prior to a WP city and district level workers' conference. Gono Forum leaders on June 2 proposed a review of the constitution and post-election national unity government.

On Wednesday last, Commerce Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman revealed a government bid to form a "constitutional review commission" which would leave its recommendations to the elected government who would implement them. "If the reviews are to be implemented by the next government, why should the review body be formed now?" Menon asked adding, "The elected government can do it."

Menon criticised the government steps for framing new laws for local government polls and described the rules as marks of depoliticisation attempts. He also said the recent mass arrests of grassroots politicians are clear indications of the government's intention of creating terror and fear among political parties, suppressing them and controlling the local government polls.

Diabetes in children

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more than 5 kilograms at birth are more prone to the disease.

The general population of the country lack the concept of diabetes in children and they are not aware of the symptoms of the disease either. For this reason, most guardians of young diabetic patients fail to seek medical attention at the early stage of the disease, they said.

Nazmun Nahar, child specialist at BIRDEM Hospital, said, "Most of the children with diabetes are brought in to the hospital in unconscious state after their conditions get complicated with Ketoacidosis complications. It is very difficult for physicians to save their lives at this stage."

She said that the symptoms of diabetes in children are almost similar to that in adults -- frequent urination, excessive feeling of thirst, recurrent infections and loss of weight, etc.

"But the symptoms are not the same for every child. So, parents of a child should be careful and have their child's blood sugar tested if their child suffers from infections for a long period or delayed growth," she said.

Uncontrolled diabetes can damage vital organs of the body such as the kidneys, the nervous system and can cause recurring infections as well as impediment to growth of a child, said the child specialist.

Most people living in rural areas are not aware that children can also get the disease and most paediatric diabetic patients are brought to BIRDEM at their last stage, she said observing that only one specialised hospital to treat diabetic patients is not sufficient for the entire population of the country.

During a visit to the BIRDEM Hospital, this correspondent came across a 17-month-old boy named Siam who was brought to the hospital from a distant district after being diagnosed with diabetes.

Siam's mother said even a few months ago, she could not imagine that such an infant could be diagnosed with diabetes.

She took her son to the sadar hospital after he fell unconscious suddenly. Prior to that, she noticed that Siam had been losing weight and had excessive thirst for water.

The doctors in the hospital treated the boy with saline for dehydration. As his condition deteriorated the mother brought him to the Dhaka Shishu Hospital and from there she took him to a private clinic.

Power plant case

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standing used their influence to help a foreign company and its local partners win a deal for setting up the 100MW barge-mounted power plant and thus deprived the lowest bidder.

ACC Deputy Director Morshed Alam, also the investigation officer (IO) of the Tk 3 crore graft case, submitted the charge sheet to the Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court on January 10 this year.

The name of Bangabandhu Memorial Trust (BMT) curator Sayed Siddiqur Rahman was included in the charge sheet as his involvement in the graft was found in the probe.

The trial of the case is going on at the Special Judge's Court-1 set up on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises.

Hasina filed the petition with the HC for quashing the trial proceedings on June 2. In the petition, the former premier also sought bail in the case.

The AL chief's counsels barrister Rafique-ul-Huq and barrister Shafique Ahmed yesterday said Hasina was not involved in any corruption regarding the Bangabandhu Memorial Trust.

"Some 1200 poor students, not Sheikh Hasina, are the beneficiaries of the Bangabandhu Memorial Trust," he added.

Dhaka yet to reach

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include the need for increased measures to protect expatriate labourers against forced labour, and increased action against internal bonded labour and forced child labour," the report said adding that the absolute number of trafficked victims is also large.

The government's "continued lack of efforts to protect victims of forced labour, who constitute a large proportion of trafficking victims in Bangladesh" was also identified as an area of concern by the report.

But the report found criminal prosecutions against sex traffickers went up and the government initiated "criminal enforcement of laws overseeing migrant labour recruitment".

The state department also lauded the government efforts to prevent trafficking and signing a number of bilateral agreements with destination countries to pursue traffickers and repatriate trafficked children, men and women.

The US recommends that Bangladesh significantly increase criminal prosecutions and punishments for trafficking related to fraudulent recruiting and forced child labour.

Bangladesh is on the second tier of the state department's ranking of countries with trafficking problems. It had dropped down to the third tier in 2004.

IDB offers

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formally raise the ceiling. But if we need to an extent of \$ 1.5 billion, they feel that should not be a problem," the finance adviser told reporters at Zia International Airport yesterday, on return from the conference.

He said Bangladesh also requested the finance at a lower rate only for the portion from IDB's own resources.

"They (IDB) will examine the concessional element of the financing... the response seemed to be good," the adviser said, adding that he has been given an assurance that they will continue to finance at a rate of LIBOR plus 1.75 percent (over 4 percent).

From this year, IDB's trade-financing window Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC) will deal with the trade financing issues, including imports of fuel oil and agriculture inputs.

The ITFC has been established to promote trade of the IDB member countries through providing trade finance and engaging in activities that facilitate intra-trade and international trade.

The annual conference, the finance adviser said, has decided to set up a \$ 1.5 billion fund in the IDB over next five years to assist member countries, particularly the LDCs including Bangladesh, to deal with the food security issues in view of the global price situation.

The assistance will come partly in the form of budget support and partly as developing agriculture infrastructure like irrigation facilities and importing agriculture inputs like fertiliser and irrigation pumps. "Details will be worked out later," the adviser added.

BNP seeks unity

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The government is arresting political activists in a bid to retain power and to loot more," he said adding that even though indoor politics is now allowed, the administration is drawing up lists of its leaders and workers who show up at party offices.

He said they asked the government to lift the emergency laws and release the two former ministers in order to create an angelic atmosphere for a meaningful dialogue and for an acceptable election.

But the government turns deaf ear to the demands, he said. "Khaleda Zia has now said that the dialogue is nothing but a managed drama. A dialogue with an unelected government won't produce any positive outcome," he said.

Hinting at military interface in politics and governance, the BNP secretary general Jidur Rahman said Bangladesh has been subjected to repeated threats after its withdrawal in the lack of democratic practices.

"Changes would usher in democratic practices if we could have at least five to seven general elections without any interference."

Asked about the termination of Dhaka City unit BNP committee, he said the committee was dissolved on orders of the party leadership.

Everything in the party would happen in accordance with the direction of the chairperson he added. Standing committee member RA Gani, Vice President Jari Rahman, joint secretaries Jari Selima Rahman and Jari Manir, acting office secretary Rizvi Ahmed, among others present.

Earlier, leaders of reformed Sylhet district unit BNP met at this flat.

Sigma Hudud

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The watchdog pressed charges against them on June 4 last year.

On August 27, 2007, special court sent Sigma for their simple imprisonment annual for seven years' rigorous sentence in the bribery case.

The ACC filed the case against Helaluddin with Gulshah Station on March 6 last on charge of abetting his wife who was charged with amassing wealth illegally in the same case.

On July 4, 2007, a court convicted Helal of trying to help his father cover up ill-gotten property by channelling Tk 5.64 into the bank accounts of his mother-in-law after the amount from his father joint account.

He was sentenced 10 years for the crime. Nasir was 10 years' rigorous imprisonment for illegally amassing wealth three years' simple imprisonment for concealing wealth worth over Tk 6.72 crore.

Later on December 1 year, the HC granted bail to Helal and the two co-defendants on their petitions.

The ACC, however, appealed to the Appellate Division of the HC orders, securing a stay of the bail orders on May 1.

The Appellate Div in its ruling said that appellants, including the HC, have the jurisdiction to grant individuals convicted by courts trying cases file the Emergency Power Rule.

The apex court, however, said that appellate court may grant three grounds: if the appellants have short prison terms' appeal against the specific sentence was not disallowed in the stipulated 90 days list constituted medical certificates that the appellants.

Advocate daker Mahbubuddin Aljoor of Helal while barrister Rafique-ul-Huq for Sigma.

Hillary vows

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"Her supporters have every reason to gather and celebrate that, and we're confident the party will be united with her help," she said.

On November 4, voters must pick between Obama, 46, a freshman senator and charismatic mixed-race champion of a new political generation, and McCain, 71, a Vietnam war hero asking for one final call to service.

Obama had plunged straight into the five-month election battle Wednesday, crossing swords with McCain in a speech to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC).

Laying out the contours of his presidential program, Obama insisted Jerusalem must remain the undivided capital of Israel, and said he would work to "eliminate" the threat posed by Iran.

His appearance was very impressive. His words on Jerusalem were very moving," Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert told reporters after meeting President George W. Bush in the White House.

McCain's campaign was swiftly on the attack, denouncing Obama for presenting a "rather odd, alternative reality."

"Senator Obama really presents kind of a false choice today, that the only diplomacy that can work is with Iranian leaders," McCain's senior foreign policy adviser Randy Scheunemann told reporters.

Clinton had already sung Obama's praises to AIPAC, a powerful pro-Israel lobby, seeking to shed his perceived weaknesses among Jewish voters.

"Let me be very clear, I know that Senator Obama will be a good friend to Israel," she said.

McCain's camp also hammered

AL rejects

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war criminals," AL acting General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam told reporters hinting at BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami after the presidential meeting last night.

The meeting was held at AL acting President Zillur Rahman's Gulshan home.

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday said, "A united movement is now the only way to overcome the existing crises."

On June 02, AL rejected the BNP chairperson's call for all-party unity. Ashraf then said as a secular political party, AL would never unite with the "fundamental and radical" BNP-Jamaat.

Responding to Ashraf's rejection, Delwar yesterday said, "For Allah's sake and for the people's interest, please say 'yes' to unity."

On the review of the constitution, Syed Ashraf said, "The sole responsibility of the caretaker government is to hold a free and fair election and reviewing the constitution is the job of an elected parliament."

Chaired by Zillur Rahman, the meeting discussed the overall political situation in the country including the countrywide mass arrests, mass signature collection campaign of AL and AL central leaders' tour of districts for holding extended meetings.

Briefing journalists, Ashraf said, "Awami League is part of the 14-party combine. We do not need to unite with others since there are people with us." The AL acting general secretary also ruled out any possibility of a movement coinciding with the movement of political archival BNP.

Termining the government's

6 Bangladeshis

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on import of Bangladeshis workers. As a gesture of goodwill, Foreign Adviser Itekkhar Ahmed Chowdhury, who is also in charge of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, visited Oman last month.

He raised with the Omani government the matter of release of Mohammed Momin Mia and some others, and was assured that this would be considered favourably.

The adviser expressed satisfaction at the news of acquittal and hoped that "the higher court would endorse the decision."

Oman has already become a major source of employment for Bangladeshi workers. Currently there are 1,62,133 Bangladeshi workers in Oman.

45 killed

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the LTTE was quoted as saying by the pro-rebel Tamilnet.com website. The rebels did not disclose details about their own casualties.

It was not possible to independently verify the military's claims because journalists are banned from the northern jungles where much of the fighting takes place. Each side commonly exaggerates its enemy's casualties and plays down its own.

The government has pledged to capture rebel-held territory and to crush the insurgents by the end of the year.

The Tamil Tiger rebels have fought since 1983 to create an independent state for minority ethnic Tamils, who have been marginalised by successive governments controlled by majority Sinhalese. More than 70,000 people have been killed in the conflict.

ACC okays

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exchequer by unnecessarily constructing a footbridge at a location insignificant for the public, Hanif said.

Charge will be pressed against Faisal Khan and his wife for amassing about Tk 7.8 crore beyond their known sources of income and concealing of information worth about Tk 6.93 crore.

Now detained Kazi Zafraiah and his wife will be sued for illegally amassing over Tk 19 crore beyond their known sources of income, said the ACC director general.

Commenting on rumours about the resignation of the ACC chairman, Hanif said, "A rumour is now on a personal vacation abroad."

About allegations of corruption against other NGOs, he said the ACC has been working on specific allegations. "We will act if any corruption is detected and exposed against any NGO."

Medical boards

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government's bid to send the two party chiefs abroad as the authorities have taken up initiatives to find out ways for their release--conditional or unconditional--to pave the way for a successful dialogue with participation of the two parties.

The authorities had unofficial talks with the two leaders at various levels at the special jails in the last few weeks, the sources said.

The board for Hasina is led by National Eye Science Institute and Hospital Director Prof Syed Maruf Ali and comprises Dr Shamim Ahmed, director of National Kidney Institute, Prof ABM Abdullah, medicine specialist of BSMMU and Hasina's personal physician, HM Nazmul Ahsan, medicine specialist of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, and Dr Momtaz Uddin of the health directorate.

Prof Abdullah, however, told The Daily Star that he does not even know a board had been formed for Hasina let alone him being its member.

Chest Diseases Hospital Director Prof Mustafizur Rahman leads the board formed for Koko.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, Deputy Inspector General of Prisons Maj Shamsul Haider Siddiqui said, "Although the board members examined them (Hasina and Koko), they did not submit the reports yet."

Replying to a query, he said, "We are not aware whether the boards were formed to send them abroad." He said representatives from the jail authorities were present during the check-ups.

Both the boards found Hasina and Koko suffering from various ailments. The board for Hasina primarily suggested that some treatment including that for her ears would have to be conducted abroad.

After getting the reports of the boards, the government would take necessary steps within several days, according to the sources.

UN summit

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distress," he told the summit.

The wrangling over diplomatic language came after UN officials announced almost three billion dollars (two billion euros) of new aid to help ease the food crisis.

Those new pledges were welcomed, but UN chief Ban Ki-moon warned that up to 20 billion dollars a year would be needed. "We simply cannot afford to fail," he told the summit hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Food prices have doubled in three years, according to the World Bank, sparking riots in Egypt and Haiti and in many African nations. Brazil, Vietnam, India and Egypt have all imposed food export restrictions.

The first day of the summit Tuesday saw colourful remarks by the presidents of Iran and Zimbabwe about Western pressure, while there has been plenty of criticism of rich countries' protection of their markets.

But by Wednesday, John Holmes, head of the UN task force on the crisis, said a "broad consensus" was building around an action plan, which is scheduled to be presented at a Group of Eight meeting in Japan later this month.

Sohel, Salman

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tax, to a special court for its trial. **CASE AGAINST BEXIMCO**

ACC Assistant Director Mojibur Rahman, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the FRT to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court of Dhaka.

The other discharged accused are former Arab Bangladesh Bank Ltd MD Abu Hanif, former officials MA Awal and Tawhidul Islam, Beximco Holdings Ltd Directors Iqbal Ahmed, MA Qasem, Osman Kaiser Chowdhury and ex-official Binoy Krishna Nath.

In the probe report, the IO mentioned that the case was filed against the accused on charges of fraudulently obtaining a bank loan of Tk 191.39 crore. But the charges brought against the accused were not proved. Moreover, the accused has paid all the loans taken from the bank, the IO said.

The IO appealed to the court for discharge of the accused from the charges.

On October 1 last year, ACC Assistant Director Mahbulul Alam filed the case with the Motijheel Police Station where he alleged that the accused showed 151.51 acres of Gazipur land as security for the loan, though the land belonged to the government and others.

The former bank officials were also accused in the case as they provided the loan without checking the documents that later turned out to be forged.

PINTO CASE
Senior Special Judge Mohammad Azizul Haque of Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court sent the graft case against Pinto and his wife to the Special Court-7 for its trial.

Detained Pinto and his wife Kalpana, now on bail, were present in the court during yesterday's hearing.

Bank borrowing

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Despite price adjustment of petroleum products, the government needs to provide more than Tk 6,000 crore for fuels and over Tk 3,000 crore for fertiliser in subsidies.

Another Tk 3,000 crore will be spent as subsidies in food and electricity and incentives on exports, the draft budget of FY08-09 shows.

In addition, the government is going to introduce four new social safety-net programmes of Tk 3,000 crore to alleviate the sufferings of the people bearing the brunt of high food prices.

The government is also considering 10 percent increase in the amount for the existing social safety-net programmes in the next budget.

The amount for targeted social empowerment, social safety net, poverty reduction and employment generation programmes in the current fiscal year is more than Tk 3,893 crore.

The expenditure against the wages of government employees in FY07-08 is about Tk 13,507 crore, which will be more than Tk 19,000 crore in the next fiscal year as the government will provide dearness allowances of around 20 percent to its employees.

If the government plans to provide the dearness allowances with retrospective effect then the expenditure in the current fiscal year will be increased, sources said.

On revenue income, the draft budget shows that targeted revenue income in FY08-09 is Tk 69,401 crore, which was Tk 57,301 crore in the current budget.

Of the FY08-09 targeted revenue, NBR related taxes are Tk

Tangail journo

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They alleged that Sagir is trying to save the jailer and the jail guards, who assaulted the journalist, by hiding the real facts.

The meeting, chaired by Tangail Press Club president Ataur Rahman Azad, was attended, among others, by its former president Dr Mohammad Kamruzzaman and Khan Mohammad Khaled, and general secretary of the press club Zafar Ahmed.

Following instructions from Jailer Nazrul Islam, several jail guards swooped on Mirza Shakil, Tangail correspondent of The Daily Star, while he was collecting information on irregularities at the district jail on May 24. Shakil sustained injuries to the chest, back and neck.

Two jail guards were stand released and temporarily suspended in connection with the incident and a three-member probe body led by Sagir Miah was formed the same day.