

Hasina may fly

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contest in the next parliamentary election, and will return to the country before the poll scheduled for the third week of December this year, the party sources said.

Meanwhile, the government yesterday held a series of meetings with officials concerned discussing at length possible ways and means to allow the AL chief to go abroad 'for treatment'.

Sources at the home ministry and at the Chief Adviser's Office said the government however could not take a concrete decision regarding the matter till last night.

Since Hasina refused to be released on parole, a legal procedure to set free a prisoner on humanitarian grounds, the government was evaluating all other possible means before issuing the executive order.

A senior home ministry official said the government was assessing the situation very seriously as an executive order releasing Hasina, will also greatly affect the cases against other corruption suspects now in jails.

He said the context of the executive order will be very important, there is a fear that it might open up opportunities for other high profile prisoners, now facing corruption and extortion charges, by setting a precedent.

Hasina was earlier exempted by courts from personally attending the hearings of the cases against her, but that does not mean she is being released on bail or on parole. She is facing a plethora of corruption and extortion cases.

"Since she is a charge sheeted accused there are many legal complexities in sending her abroad," said the home ministry official, adding that the crisis regarding the matter would not have arisen had she stayed at home.

The government will however impose some conditions restricting Hasina's movement after her release, like it did to AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil, the sources said.

Earlier on March 3, the government released seriously ill Jalil on parole from detention for treatment abroad. Jalil is now undergoing treatment in Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore.

His condition is being reported to the Bangladesh mission every three days since his arrival there for treatment.

He was released on condition that he will not get involved in politics and business there, will not communicate with anybody or any organisation about any issue except issues related to his health, the government will be informed immediately after his treatment is completed, and that he will return home and not travel to any other country.

The first high level meeting of the government yesterday took place at the home ministry in the morning where Home Adviser Maj Gen (ret'd) MA Matin, Home Secretary Abdul Karim, and Inspector General of Prisons Brig Gen Zakir Hasan were present.

After the meeting, Zakir Hasan told reporters that they were yet to receive any order from the government about the detained AL president, while Matin declined to make any comment.

The home adviser and the home secretary then went to the CA's office where they had discussions on the issue with other advisers.

Matin sat for another meeting in his office in Bangladesh Secretariat in the afternoon, which was attended by the home secretary, Inspector General of Police Nur Mohammad, and other senior home ministry officials.

"I am unable to say anything," he told reporters in his office last night when asked about the government's decision regarding Hasina's release. He also declined to comment on whether Hasina's release will be conditional.

Meanwhile, the AL sources said whether Hasina will abide by the conditions will depend on whether another detained former prime minister also BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia also goes abroad 'for better treatment'. If the BNP chairperson does not go abroad then the situation might be changed in the future, AL sources added.

The courts' exemptions for Hasina came following recommendations of a medical board, formed by the military backed caretaker government, that Hasina be sent abroad for 'treating her hearing problem' at the facility where she had been treated before.

The sources said the AL chief wants to visit her Sudha Sadan residence and Bangabandhu Memorial Museum, both in Dhanmondi, before leaving the country. A negotiation between the authorities concerned and the AL president is going on regarding fulfilling her wishes before departure, but the government has so far been reluctant to allow her to go to those two places on security grounds, the sources added.

AL sources said Hasina's departure might pave the way for AL to join the ongoing dialogues with the caretaker government, and to participate in the upcoming parliamentary poll.

AL has long been demanding unconditional release of its chief as a precondition for sitting in the ongoing politico-electoral talks between the government and political parties, and for contesting in the upcoming election. The government unofficially began hectic negotiations with Hasina early last month to bring her party to the table, according to the sources.

"I hope that the political deadlock will be removed soon and an environment conducive to holding election will be created in the country and Awami League will take a decision to take part in the election," said AL Acting General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam yesterday while addressing an extended meeting of Awami Swachhasheba League at the Diploma Engineers' Institution in the capital.

Syed Ashrafur expressed hope that Sheikh Hasina will be released soon.

AL leaders Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta, Motia Chowdhury, Abdul Mannan, Akhtaruzzaman, among others also addressed the meeting.

They also demanded unconditional release of Hasina so that the former premier may take part in the upcoming parliamentary poll. Amu said they have to initiate a new process now so that Hasina may participate in the election campaign and they may participate in the election under her leadership. He urged the government to put an end to all speculations by releasing Hasina immediately.

Amu, however, ruled out the possibility of any united movement with BNP.

Tofail asked the government to realise AL's six-point demand including withdrawal of the state of emergency for creating a congenial atmosphere for a credible election in the country.

He said AL will be led and run by Sheikh Hasina's directives, wherever she might be.

Motia demanded immediate withdrawal of all 'false charges' against Hasina and her unconditional release.

Correction

In a news item headlined "Borrowing bothers economists" printed yesterday, a comment of Zaid Bakht should read as "the government will have to depend on huge bank borrowings to cover the budget deficit" instead of "the government will have to borrow between Tk 30,000 crore and Tk 35,000 crore from the banking sector to meet the deficit".

In the same story, picture of Quazi Shahabuddin, director general of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), was inadvertently printed with the caption "Asaduzzaman", research director of BIDS. We regret the errors.

ACC permitted

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allegations of misappropriation of funds from the orphanage trust against her.

Earlier on Monday, the same court allowed the ACC to interrogate the former prime minister's two sons Tarique Rahman and Koko at jail gate on the same charges.

The ACC filed the corruption case against Koko on April 23 this year, accusing that he made a fortune of over Tk 2.23 lakh through illegal means and concealed information about property worth over Tk 11.20 lakh.

Tarique, senior joint secretary general of the BNP, was arrested on March 7 last year after a general diary (GD) was filed against him under the Emergency Power Rules while Khaleda and Koko were detained on September 3 the same year after the filing of the Gato graft case.

SILVER SELIM CASE
Judge Mohammad Azizul Haque at Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court issued arrest warrants against the wife, son and daughter of detained former BNP lawmaker MAH Selim alias Silver Selim in a corruption case.

Selim's wife Amina Begum, son Mehedi Hasan and daughter Sahara Selim who are in hiding are accused, along with the ex-MP of amassing illegal wealth worth about Tk 73 crore and hiding information on about Tk 22 crore property to the ACC.

ACC Assistant Director Shamsul Alam, also the IO of the case, submitted the charge sheet against them on Monday.

The ACC filed the case with Gulshan Police Station on December 6 last year.

Manju

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Faiz Alam filed the case with Shahbagh Police Station on July 25 last year accusing Manju of taking Tk 75 lakh in bribe from China National Overseas Engineering Corporation to get them work of constructing a road stretching 27 kilometres from Mollahat to Town-Noapara in Bagerhat, public prosecutor Harun Ur Rashid said.

At that time, Manju was the communications minister, he added. Earlier, Manju was given a five-year jail sentence and fined Tk 10,000 on June 26 last year for possessing 21 bottles of alcohol at his Dhanmondi house. He was also sentenced to seven years jail in another bribery case on May 18.

Meanwhile, Judge Ashraf Hossain of Special Court-5 delivered the judgment against Rajib Siraj and fined him Tk 8.78 lakh, defaulting on which will earn him one more year in jail.

The court also ordered the authorities concerned to confiscate his wealth worth of over Tk 8 crore which he amassed illegally and tried to legalise the amount through investment.

On November 20 last year, ACC Assistant Director Khairul Huda filed the case with Gulshan Police Station accusing him of trying to legalise his illegal money by investing it in One Denim Milk Ltd Company during the period of July 20, 2006 to January 29 last year through 38 vouchers.

Since he is on the run, his sentence will come into effect from the day of his arrest or surrender.

JS delimitation
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3 and Narayanganj-2 and 3 at 12:00 noon, and Dhaka-11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 at 3:00pm.

SYLHET DIVISION
June 19: Sunamganj-4, Sylhet-1, 3 and 4 at 10:00am, and Moulvibazar-1, 2 and 4 at 12:00 noon at Sylhet Circuit House.

June 22: Brahmanbaria-1, 2, 3 and 10:00am, Brahmanbaria-5 and 6 and Comilla-2, 7, 8 and 10, and Chandpur-1, 2, 3 and 4 at 3:00pm at Comilla Deputy Commissioner's conference room.

CHITTAGONG DIVISION
June 23: Feni-3, Noakhali-1 and 2 at 10:00am, Chittagong-5, 6 and 7 at 12:00noon, and Chittagong-12 and 13 at 3:00pm at Chittagong Circuit House.

BARISAL DIVISION
June 25: Barguna-1 and 2, Patuakhali-2 at 10:00am, Patuakhali-4 and Barisal-2 and 3 at 12:00 noon, and Barisal-4 and Projpur-2 and 3 at 3:00pm at Barisal DC's conference room.

KHULNA DIVISION
June 27: Jessore-4, 5 and 6 at 10:00am, and Khulna-5 and 6 at 12:00 noon at Khulna DC's conference room.

RAJSHAHI DIVISION
June 30: Rajshahi-6, Kurigram-2 and 3 at 10:00am, Bogra-1, 3 and 4 at 12:00noon, and Bogra-5, 6 and 7 and Sirajganj-1, 2, 5 and 6 at 3:00pm at Rajshahi DC's conference room.

The EC has requested the petitioners concerned to be present in time at the specific locations with necessary papers and documents in support of their objections about delimitation.

Khaleda demands

FROM PAGE 1
violating the constitution, so it has no right to announce the budget," BNP Secretary General and Khaleda's counsel Khandaker Delwar Hossain quoted her saying.

"Article 83 of the constitution says only parliament can impose taxes on the people, not any non-elected government," Khaleda said.

In their petition, the defence counsels told the court that they received relevant papers and documents of the case yesterday morning and could not consult their clients about them.

Koko's counsel barrister Mahub Uddin Khokon also filed a petition for sending Koko abroad for treatment, saying he has been in hospital since arrest and despite having been under treatment, his condition is rather deteriorating day by day.

He said Koko is "physically unfit" to face the trial. "The law does not approve putting an unfit accused in the dock for trial," he said.

Khaleda's counsel Abdur Rezaque Khan prayed the court for adjourning the proceedings of the case, saying trial cannot be conducted against any sick person keeping them in the dock as they "cannot conceive what is going on in the court and instruct their lawyers accordingly from time to time during trial".

Khandaker Delwar urged the court to give orders allowing Khaleda's ailing sons-Tarique Rahman and Koko-to go abroad for better treatment as the government-constituted medical board suggested sending them abroad for treatment.

To strengthen his argument, Delwar referred to the court order that exempted detained former premier and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina from appearing in person before the court during trial proceedings.

Opposing the defence, Public Prosecutor Golam Hafiz told the court that they had not received any such petition for sending Koko abroad from the defence through the required legal process. He said the prosecution has no objection regarding Koko's treatment.

Khaleda, Koko and other accused in the case were produced before the Special Court on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises amid tight security as the court resumed at 11:20am.

Koko was taken to the court by an ambulance from Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University at 10:35am.

Nepali king

FROM PAGE 16
massive palace in the heart of the city will be turned into a museum.

Meanwhile, Nepal's ousted king is thought to have close to 200 million dollars stashed away inside the country and even more abroad, according to an author who has probed royal finances.

Surya Thapa, a journalist who has written three books on the Himalayan royals, said ex-king Gyanendra is unlikely to feel any financial squeeze as a commoner, and that state accountants will have a tough time if they want to confiscate his wealth.

"According to my research, he has around 195 million dollars invested in around 35 companies in Nepal and may have transferred more abroad," said Thapa.

"Nobody knows how much money he has outside Nepal and there is no way anyone can find out," he said.

The author said Nepal's royals have a history of putting their cash abroad and doing their best to conceal it.

Up to nearly three decades ago, "the royal family was very visibly investing in land, property, companies and industry," said Thapa. But a referendum in 1980 giving the royals a slim vote of approval made them fear for their future.

"The vote alarmed them so they started investing very silently" through third parties such as loyal supporters, he told AFP.

"Gyanendra has been good at concealing his investments," said Thapa, who did his research by tracking land registration documents linked to the royals and interviewed scores of royal business associates, pro-royal politicians and palace workers.

His comments came as a government official said that Gyanendra was also refusing to cooperate with a committee set up to audit royal property and that his diamond and ruby-adorned crown had yet to be recovered.

Nepal's monarchy was abolished on May 28 by a constitutional assembly.

Musharraf

FROM PAGE 16
resulting in the death of hundreds of innocent boys and girls".

Over 650 people "illegally picked up from different parts of the country were handed over to the US in return for dollars", it alleges. The charge sheet also accuses Musharraf of setting "new examples of cronyism, nepotism, corruption and favouritism".

Unveiling the chargesheet on Sunday, PML-N leader Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan alleged Musharraf made billions of rupees as his close associates got massive contracts from state-run firms. He also allegedly earned billions of rupees from defence deals.

Khan said these were not mere allegations as substantial evidence is available that could be presented in parliament during impeachment proceedings. Khan opposed the idea of giving Musharraf a safe exit and said he should be tried for treason.

He also said the PML-N will formally demand the formation of a commission to probe the Kargil episode so that "those responsible for the misadventure could be brought to book".

Khaleda embraced her son when he was produced before the court at 11:20am on a wheelchair with the help of his doctor. But Koko fell ill within a few minutes. He was taken out of the courtroom at 11:24am and brought back to hospital.

Newsmen from different print and electronic media were not allowed to talk to Khaleda.

But the BNP chairperson flashed a smile after hearing the news about the process of releasing Sheikh Hasina at the behest of the government.

Later, talking to journalists, Delwar said there is "pressure" on Khaleda for going abroad along with her son, which is "illegal and unjust".

Seventeen accused including former LGRD minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, former health minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, former land minister M Shamsul Islam, former agriculture minister MK Anwar, former state minister for energy AKM Mosharraf Hossain and former industries minister Motiur Rahman Nizami of Jamaat-e-Islami were produced before the court.

4 Huji cadres

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team of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), acting on information given by Huji kingpin Mufti Abdul Hannan during his remand, arrested Ameer of Magura district Khelafat Majlis (KM) Mokaddes Ali and its general secretary Bakibillah in a raid on October 29 for their alleged activities in favour of banned Islamist outfit Huji under the banner of KM.

Acting on information obtained from the arrestees, Rab dug out two Chinese rifles, 86 rounds of bullet, two bombs, two pairs of army uniform and a huge quantity of explosives from the grounds of Kharabilla field in Nohata area under Mohammadpur upazila.

After recovery of the arms and explosives, the arrestees were taken to Dhaka for interrogation.

On October 31, a case was filed with the Mohammadpur police station against them. Following their confessions, two other Huji cadres Rafiqul and Khalil were indicted in the case.

After examining all records and witnesses Judge Mohammad Rahibul Islam of Special Tribunal Court No 3 in Magura gave the verdict yesterday.

Niko graft case

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Hasina was not brought to the court yesterday as the judge Monday exempted her from appearing in person during court proceedings on health grounds.

The former prime minister was represented by her counsel barrister Fazle Noor Tapash.

Two other accused--former power secretary Dr Toufique-e-Elahi Chowdhury and former state minister for power Prof Rafiqul Islam--were, however, produced before the court.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) filed the graft case with Tejgaon Police Station on December 9 last year against seven people, including Hasina.

The watchdog on May 7, however, pressed charges against nine people as investigations later revealed the involvement of two more people in the corruption in awarding gas extraction work at Chhatak, Kamta and Feni gas fields to Canadian company Niko for their personal gains.

The charge sheet also mentioned that the work was given to Niko without floating any tenders, allowing it to extract 1,794 billion cubic feet (bcf) of gas from an estimated reserve of 2,834 bcf, causing the country a loss of Tk 13,630.50 crore.

2 businessmen

FROM PAGE 16
of Jewel's pickup vans on a daily basis --killed Jewel and Tutul with the help of some 15 to 20 accomplices."

He said that Akbar had previously also delayed some payments for hire of the van. This time when he delayed payment again, the two men had heated exchanges over the matter.

On Monday night, at around 11 pm, when Jewel threatened Akbar for outstanding payments, Akbar called up people from a nearby slum and beat up both Jewel and his friend Tutul. They also damaged Jewel's microbus.

Babul said that Jewel and Tutul returned to Ghuntighar at around 1:00 am, with eight accomplices, to settle the feud with Akbar. At the time, some 15 to 20 of Akbar's accomplices swooped on them and stabbed them to death.

Tutul's uncle Shamim Ahmed said, "Jewel took Tutul out with him to repair the damaged microbus at a Narinda garage. Tutul was killed when he tried to save Jewel."

Relatives of Jewel and Tutul said that Akbar was locally known as a criminal.

Eyewitnesses said at least 20 people from Ghuntighar swooped on Jewel and Tutul with knives and bamboo sticks. They surrounded the two businessmen to make sure they couldn't escape, before hacking them to death.

Jewel's wife Mukta Begum has filed a case with Jatrabri police station.

Police said Akbar and his accomplices have gone into hiding since the killings.

Meanwhile, police has arrested Jewel's microbus driver Yusuf for questioning. They are continuing raids at different city points to track down Akbar and his accomplices.

Mysterious
FROM PAGE 1
hearing similar sounds, also around the same time.

When contacted, police from different police stations said they also heard the explosion-like sounds but could not ascertain where it came from.

ISPR officials said they have no information regarding the matter.

3 killed
FROM PAGE 16
scene. Police said Mias was wanted in eight criminal cases.

In Pabna, a team of Rab-12 and police jointly launched a drive on information that operatives of an outlawed party are holding a secret meeting near 'Sargam Dakhil Madrasa' at village Sargam in Ataikula upazila, according to our correspondent.

When Rab and policemen reached near the madrasa at around 1:30am, the outlaws opened fire, forcing the law enforcers to retaliate.

Rab officials said Anis received bullets during the gunfight and died on the spot, while his cohorts managed to flee.

A single-barrel gun and three bullets were recovered from the spot.

Rab said Anis was wanted in nine murder cases filed with Santhia, Faridpur and Ataikula police stations.

Our Staff Correspondent from Rajshahi adds: Suspected criminal Alauddin was killed during a "shoot-out" between his cohorts and Rab members at Sonarpura in Sadar upazila of Joypurhat district early yesterday.

Receiving information, a team of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) went to Sonarpura graveyard at around 2:10am where Alauddin and his accomplices were holding a meeting.

Sensing the presence of the Rab personnel, the criminals open fire, forcing the elite force to counter.

Rab sources said Alauddin received bullets during the gunfight while his cohorts managed to flee. He was taken to Joypurhat Sadar Hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

Alauddin was an accused in seven criminal cases including four for murder, the sources added.

A shutter gun, four bullets, one 0.22 bore revolver loaded with six bullets, two bombs, two knives and two torch lights were recovered from the scene.

Children's books

FROM PAGE 1
children uphold our local culture, I propose to impose 25 percent customs duty on such books."

The teachers and guardians opposed the views of the adviser and said the English medium pictorials and drawing books do not contain any objectionable material.

Only if the government detects any specific educational material that does not conform to the values and culture of the country, it should impose additional duty on the particular item or take stern action against the importer of the material, they suggested.

Marshal Mandal, a teacher at Wills Little Flower School, said, "The pictorials or drawing books do not contain any offensive picture and I personally object to this blame on English medium books. The government shouldn't impose any customs duty before identifying any particular book that contains offensive material."

A teacher at Mastermind School, another English medium school in the capital, said the government should have consulted with the stakeholders prior to imposing the new customs duty on any educational material.

"Last fiscal year, the government imposed a 4.5 percent VAT (value added tax) on English medium schools without any consultation with the people concerned. Then again, this year, the government is proposing a 25 percent duty on pictorials and drawing books," he said adding that he did not quite understand why the government is up against the English medium schools.

A number of guardians said they are already burdened with the 4.5 percent VAT on educational fees at English medium schools and they would have difficulties coping with the rising expenses unless the government withdraws the proposed duty on educational materials.

Jahangir Ahmed, father of a student at Scholastica School, said, "When price of an educational item goes up, the prices of other related materials also follow that path. I am sure the prices of drawing materials, especially colouring pencils and drawing papers, will also rise once the prices of pictorials and drawing books are increased due to the new customs duty."

On top of the rising cost of books and other educational materials, the guardians of school going children have been paying a hefty amount of fees to the English medium schools as the school authorities make the most of every opportunity to overcharge the guardians, Jahangir alleged saying that instead of collecting Tk 166.5 VAT against Tk 3,700 monthly fee for a student of Standard II, the school authorities have been collecting Tk 4,200.

Academicians observed that the new import duty would worsen the situation as the buying power of the general people has diminished tremendously in the last two years.

Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury said, "I personally think that the decision is not right. The government should not impose any VAT or customs duty on any educational material or educational institution. This decision will be apothor blow to the middle class."

Golam Farooki, a book merchandiser, said the proposed customs duty would encourage piracy of books for English medium schools. "Guardians will look for low-priced books and they will end up buying the pirated versions of the original books. Therefore, in the long run, the government won't benefit from this duty increase."

However, Khondaker M Asaduzzaman, director general of directorate of primary education, told The Daily Star that the duty increase will cause a nominal increase in the prices of pictorials and drawing books and guardians of children at English medium schools can afford that price since

most of them are affluent.

"We have high quality English version books and there are a number of outstanding English version schools. So why do people still spend a huge amount of money by sending their children to English medium schools?" he added.

Prof Dr M Masir Uddin, chairman of National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), said the textbook board publishes all English version books for primary and secondary levels and the guardians could lower the cost of education for their children by sending them to English version schools.

Around 50 thousand students from classes I to X now study at government-approved English version schools where English version textbooks published by NCTB are followed, education ministry sources said adding that around 20 thousand of the students are at secondary level.

In the capital, several educational institutions including Saint Joseph High School, Rajuk Uttara Model School and College, Viharunisa Noon School, Biam Model School and College and Mohammadpur Preparatory High School have English version sections.

English version NCTB textbooks are also followed at all of 12 cadet schools and colleges across the country and in several schools in many districts including Chittagong, Rangpur and Rajshahi.

Clarification

FROM PAGE 1
prime minister Khaleda Zia.

"No such recommendation for forming a medical board has been suggested by the directorate. It is also not in the knowledge of the directorate as to whether any other government agencies have formed such board," the directorate said in its clarification.

Aug 21 attack

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The charge sheet will be submitted to a Dhaka court today.

Others to be charged are Pintu's brothers Maulana Tajuddin and Maulana Liton, Hannan's brother Mafizur Rahman alias Ovi, Maulana Abu Taher, Sharif Shahidul Islam alias Bipul, Maulana Abu Sayeed alias Dr Abu Zafar, Mufti Moin alias Abu Zandal, Abul Kalam Bulbul, Jahangir Alam, Arif Hasan Sumon, Jewel, Hossain Ahmed alias Tamim, Anisul Mursalin and his brother Mahibul Muttakin, Iqbal, Maulana Abu Bakar, Maulana Liton alias Jubayer, Uzzal alias Ratan, Rafiqul Islam Sabuj and Khalilur Rahman alias Maruf.

Eight of them -- Hannan, Bipul, Ovi, Abu Sayeed, Bulbul, Arif Hossain Sumon, Jahangir and Sabuj -- have already given judicial statements confessing their involvement.