

Dhaka, Delhi

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resolution and international arbitration for disputes.

The bilateral investment promotion pact, which really took off after India lifted the ban on the flow of investment from Bangladesh citizens and corporate houses in November last year, is expected to give a push to investments from both sides, officials sources said.

The ban on investment from Bangladesh had been imposed for security reasons and although it was lifted nine months ago, investment proposals from Bangladesh would still need prior clearance of the Foreign Investment Promotion Board even if they are meant for sectors which India has put on the automatic route.

The curb on investment flow from Bangladesh was removed also because India could not have signed the bilateral investment promotion agreement with a country from where it did not permit any investment to come in, officials pointed out.

India would have had to withdraw the restrictions even under the South Asian Free Trade agreement, they contended.

Several big Indian companies, including the Tatas, whose three billion dollar investment proposal for Bangladesh is hanging fire for more than four years, and the Essar, have evinced keen interest in putting their money in India's eastern neighbour.

Menon and Hossain said all aspects of bilateral relations were discussed at the foreign secretary-level meeting.

"The discussions were forward-looking and constructive," they said.

Bilateral trade and connectivity also came up for discussion, the two top diplomats added without elaborating.

Asked about India finding the links of Bangladesh-based terror outfit Harkatul Jihad al Islami (Huji) to a number of terror attacks in India in the recent past, Hossain said terrorism was a global issue and it has to be tackled.

Hossain led a six-member delegation of Bangladesh which also included that country's High Commissioner to India Liaquat Ali Choudhury.

Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pinak Ranjan Chakrabarty was a member of the host side at the talks.

Bangladesh urged India to reduce the huge trade deficit of nearly \$2 billion by allowing greater access of Bangladeshi products to the Indian market, news agency UNB adds.

Touhid emphasised the need for

creating conditions for increasing two-way trade.

He requested expediting the completion of export of the remaining 5 lakh tonnes of rice to Bangladesh. He also requested his counterpart to consider completely withdrawing restrictions on the export of rice from India.

Dhaka also called for expediting work to reach agreement on the sharing of the waters of the common rivers, particularly the Teesta, at the Foreign Office Consultations between the two countries, which began in New Delhi yesterday morning.

The discussions on connectivity also focused on better utilisation of the Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade, improvement of border infrastructure to facilitate trade, and the need for approaching specific issues through relevant forums.

Last year had been productive in bilateral relations, Menon said referring to the launch of Indo-Bangla Maitree Express.

COOPERATION IN TERROR CONTROL

India yesterday sought Bangladesh's cooperation in tackling terrorism "resolutely".

"The discussions were very useful and led to much greater understanding of each other's position," Foreign Secretary of India Shivshankar Menon said.

The Indian side raised the issue of terrorism allegedly emanating from Bangladesh soil and sought Dhaka's cooperation in curbing such activities.

Describing terrorism as a global problem, Touhid Hossain said the two countries have the mechanism of home secretary-level meetings to address it.

Agreeing with Menon, Touhid said the talks were "candid" and "forward-looking" and Bangladesh did not shy away from discussing any issue that is important for the present and the future.

"Terrorism has to be tackled resolutely," Menon said, adding, "We look forward to working together against terrorism."

Menon said security of the two countries is inter-linked and they should join hands on the issue.

He said home secretaries of the two countries will meet soon to discuss ways to tackle terrorism together.

For India, strengthening relations with Bangladesh is one of the highest priorities, Menon said.

He said Indian Army Chief Gen. Deepak Kapoor will soon visit Bangladesh.

Touhid Hossain said he invited Menon to Bangladesh.

EC won't call

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striking force during polls to these four city corporations in 2002. But this time, the police administration has been assigned the responsibility to maintain law and order for holding the elections peacefully.

Policemen will be deployed at polling stations and as mobile and striking forces, meeting sources said, adding that Ansar forces would also be working with the police.

Senior officials at the EC Secretariat, however, said the army, which has been working at the field level to maintain law and order since the declaration of the state of emergency on January 11 last year, would help the police in electoral areas, if necessary.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Nur Mohammad assured the EC of deploying his force to maintain law and order. "The police forces are stronger now than before," a meeting source said quoting the IGP.

Senior officials of administration of the electoral areas told the EC that they are not facing any major problems yet.

According to the meeting's decision, 24 security personnel including 10 armed policemen will be deployed at each vulnerable polling station while 22 security personnel each will be deployed at other polling stations.

Adequate number of mobile courts will also work on the polling day to try electoral offences summarily, the sources said.

The EC directed the police administration to file criminal cases against contesting candidates if they are found to spend money beyond the election expenditure ceiling for campaigns.

Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda told reporters after the meeting that the army would not be deployed for election duties.

At the meeting, Huda termed the August 4 polls a "test case" for the EC and said if the polls could be held fairly, it would impact the upcoming upazila and parliamentary elections.

Huda said many have voiced concerns over criminals' returning to their stamping grounds following the announcement of the election schedule. Only a few days have passed after the state of emergency was relaxed, he said, adding, "So, we will have to be more alert in the coming days."

8 killed

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Islam, 66, Haris Mian, 60, Kabir, 30, Jahidul, 10, Shah Alam, 35, Taj Uddin, Babul and Shahid.

Reckless driving by the bus driver defying the passengers' repeated warning caused the accident, said some locals quoting the passengers.

Police, however, could not confirm if the drivers of the vehicles were killed or escaped unhurt.

Following the accident, hundreds of vehicles remained stranded on both sides of the busy highway for about two hours.

Burnt

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time to fulfil his demand or face the consequence," he added.

When Roni's father Abdur Rouf, principal officer of Sonali Bank, Rangpur, contacted DGFI office in the town, he was told that Shuvo was transferred to Dhaka.

About 12:45 am on June 7, HSC examinee Roni wrapped up her preparations for Business Policy 1st part scheduled to be held that day and went to bed shutting the windows as the family received a renewed threat two days ago.

"Suddenly I smelt something like oil and felt my skin getting sticky," Roni recalled.

Sitting up, she found the bed and floor wet. "I heard some voices including that of Shuvo and Swapan. Panicked, I tried to open the door but it was locked from outside."

As she shouted for help, Shuvo said something. "And a lighted matchstick was thrown into my room through a hole made in the window."

Hearing her cry, her father rushed out to see flames engulfing the room inside.

Breaking into the room, Rouf saw fire has already burned her face, throat, abdomen, breasts and hands.

She was rushed to Rangpur Medical College Hospital where doctors referred her to DMCH immediately.

The father filed a case against seven including Swapan, Shuvo, Zia, Nazim, Abed Ali, Bahadur and Bakul. Police arrested Abed, Bakul and local CD shop owner Sumon the same day.

The law enforcers recovered Shuvo's cap, an empty and a half-empty bottle of petrol and a pipe used to pour petrol into the room.

Sumon said Shuvo and others stayed at his shop for about five hours till 12:30 am with two bottles of petrol, Rangpur police said, adding Abed admitted to threatening the family to withdraw the case.

Sub-inspector Humayun Kabir who is investigating the case told The Daily Star they have heard that Shuvo is now working in Dhaka. "We've yet to contact Dhaka DGFI office," he said.

When Rouf contacted DGFI office in Dhaka four days ago, the officials said he is missing, the victim's family said.

Meantime, Shuvo called Roni's aunt Alo Begum last week. "My life has been spoilt. Now I'll destroy all of your lives if you don't withdraw the case," he was quoted as threatening.

Koko freed

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that the order can be cancelled anytime without any explanation."

"He was released mainly for treatment in Thailand," he said, adding that the conditions attached to his release are like the ones followed in Awami League (AL) chief Sheikh Hasina's case.

A relative of Koko meantime told The Daily Star, "We are preparing to take him to Bangkok for treatment as early as possible. Most probably he would leave the country Saturday [tomorrow]."

A handout of the Press Information Department (PID) said that Koko has been released for two months on a number of conditions.

If he goes abroad for treatment, he or his relatives will have to report to the Bangladesh mission concerned on his health situation every three days.

He will not be allowed to engage in any political or business activities, and he must not communicate with any agency or person for any reasons other than treatment, the handout read.

Besides, if his treatment ends before eight weeks, he will contact the government and surrender before a court on return home.

According to the handout, the government might cut short the release for breach of the conditions. It can also cancel the order at any moment without giving any reason.

As the news of Koko's release spread, several hundred leaders and workers of BNP and its front organisations gathered on the BSMU premises. BNP chairperson's adviser Brig Gen (ret'd) ASM Hannan Shah, Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan and Office Secretary Rizvi Ahmed, were among those present.

In his reaction, Hannan Shah told reporters, "Though late, we are happy that the government has released Koko for treatment abroad."

Calling for immediate release of Tarique for overseas treatment, he said, "Democracy would be restored if Khaleda Zia and Tarique are released."

A large contingent of police was deployed in BSMU area to avert anything untoward.

During the time, a huge snarl-up on the road between Shahbagh and Sonargaon crossing caused sufferings to hundreds of homeward-bound commuters.

CHARGE SHEET AGAINST KOKO

At around 6:00 pm, ACC Deputy Director Abu Sayeed submitted charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in Dhaka in the case filed against Koko for ill-gotten wealth and concealment of assets information.

He showed 31 people as prosecution witnesses, reports our court correspondent.

This is the second time that the anti-graft body has pressed charges against Koko. Earlier, it charged him in Gatco graft case.

HC declares BNP-led

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priority to the recommendations of the chief justice in appointing judges or confirming their services.

If the executive authorities do not agree with the opinions of the chief justice in this regard, they can send back the recommendations with reasoning to the chief justice for reconsidering those. Non-compliance with the chief justice's recommendations in this regard will be violation of the constitution, the court said.

The HC bench delivered the judgment after hearing for a long time two separate writ petitions filed by the 10 deprived judges.

The petitioners' counsel, eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain, termed the judgment a memorable one in the history of the judiciary.

"The judiciary is the main pillar for protecting the constitution. The judges of the Supreme Court play the role of vigilant guard for preserving the constitution. The High Court has protected the constitution by delivering this memorable verdict today," he said.

While talking to newsmen, Dr Kamal said the then government ignored the chief justice's recommendations by not confirming the services of the 10 judges and thus exercised powers arbitrarily. "This action was a violation of the constitution. The judgment has proved that the judiciary is the guardian of the constitution and will play an important role in protecting the constitution," he said.

Barrister M Amir-Ul Islam, another counsel for the petitioners, said the judgment would play an important role in appointing competent, honest, skilled and brilliant judges in the High Court.

"The desire and expectation of the people for an independent judiciary have earned a victory through this judgment," he said.

Sources said after assuming power on June 23, 1996, the Awami League government in six phases appointed 40 judicial officials and lawyers as additional judges of the HC for two years.

Three judges were appointed on February 24, 1997, six on April 27, 1999, eight on October 28, 1999, five on May 28, 2000, and nine each on February 22, 2001 and July 27, 2001. One judge died after nine months of appointment while another resigned from the office.

The services of 23 additional HC judges were confirmed during the rules of the Awami League and the BNP-led four-party alliance government.

The four-party alliance government did not confirm the services of the ten 15 additional judges.

Ten of the 15 unconfirmed judges filed the two writ petitions with the HC on February 4, 2003,

Sayed, also the investigation officer, said Koko should be on trial since the charges against him of making wealth beyond his known sources of income have been proved primarily.

On April 23 this year, the ACC filed the case against him with Ramna Police Station for amassing wealth worth Tk 2.23 crore through illegal means and keeping back information on assets worth around Tk 11.20 lakh.

According to the case statement, Koko in his wealth statement to the ACC showed that he, his wife and two daughters own movable and immovable property worth around Tk 8.08 crore.

However, an ACC investigation found that the assets belonging to the family are worth more than the declared amount.

It also gathered that Koko concealed information about a flat at Banani, loans from banks and remuneration and other benefits that he might have received from different businesses.

He also held back information about 500 shares (Tk 100 each) he has in a business firm named Hasanco Aviation Ltd and two bank savings certificates (Tk 1 lakh each) under his wife's name.

His wife's investment of Tk 1.50 crore in a business and his expenses for 84 overseas trips between September 2003 and December 2006 did not match the couple's stated sources of income.

Nizami

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hearings of the two petitions would be held next week.

Deputy Attorney General (DAG) Zahurul Islam Mukul yesterday filed the petition on behalf of the government with the concerned section of the Appellate Division against the HC order.

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court will hear on the petition sometime next week.

Following a bail petition filed by Nizami, the HC on July 14 granted him bail and issued a rule upon the government to show cause as to why the petitioner should not be granted regular bail in the case. Nizami was released on July 15.

The ACC filed the Gatco case against former prime minister Khaleda Zia, Nizami and 21 others on September 2 last year on charges of corruption in awarding Global Agro Trade (Pvt) Co Ltd (Gatco) the contract for container management at inland container depots in Dhaka and Chittagong causing a loss of over Tk 1,000 crore to the state exchequer.

On May 18, two HC benches rejected a bail prayer of Nizami in the case, since the case was filed under emergency power rules (EPR) and the trial court had issued arrest warrants against him.

Nizami was arrested the same night.

Charge sheet

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suspects getting bails, he said every thing is happening in accordance with law and there was no flaw in the legal procedures the commission carried out against the suspects.

Hanif said the ACC could not deal with the matter of bail prayers since the state was moving against the bail prayers filed by corruption suspects.

"The court has given its verdict regarding bail prayers. The ACC always files cases or gives approval for filing cases when law permits or allows. The courts also directed us to provide information on a number of matters regarding some cases and we will give it to the courts soon," said Hanif Iqbal.

Hanif also said they might initiate investigations into matters involving parliamentary election candidates if the ACC feels the necessity or if the Election Commission (EC) asks the commission to do so.

APPROVED CHARGE SHEETS

The ACC yesterday approved the submission of the charge sheet before a court against Salman F Rahman.

ACC Assistant Commissioner Mahbubul Alam filed the case against Salman F Rahman on September 5 with Motijheel Police Station in connection with obtaining a loan of over Tk 158.67 crore from IFIC Bank in Beximco Group's name through forgery.

The other accused in the case are Salman's brother and Chairman of Beximco Group Sohail F Rahman, former managing director of IFIC Bank Ataul Haque, ex-manager of IFIC Bank's Motijheel Branch Asad-ul-Doula and directors of Beximco Holdings Ltd Iqbal Ahmed and MA Qasheem.

The charge sheet says that the accused returned only Tk 62.40 lakh of the loan and misappropriated the rest together.

Another charge sheet will be submitted before a court against former lawmaker Nurul Islam Moni and Jamal Hossain in connection with misappropriating corrugated iron (CI) sheets, meant for relief only, worth Tk 1.25 lakh.

Two other charge sheets will be submitted before courts against former municipality chairman Abdul Latif Biswas and temporarily suspended Detective Branch of Police sub-inspector Derik Stephen.

CASES
The ACC will file a case against Abul Hossain and four others in connection with depriving the government exchequer of Tk 2,55,20,000.

According to the case to be filed, the accused registered 92 decimals of land near Sylhet Airport Road with Tk 40 lakh. But the true value of the land is Tk 18 crore which would have required him to pay Tk 2,55,20,000 as registration fees.

The ACC will file a case against former sub-registrar of Meherpur Dewan Mojahar Hossain in connection with concealing information about his wealth worth Tk 32.63 lakh and amassing wealth worth Tk 51.11 lakh beyond his known sources of income.

The ACC will also file a case against deputy-assistant engineers of Bandabari Shafiqul Islam and Nazrul Islam after they were caught red-handed by the ACC while taking Tk 70,000 bribe.

The ACC yesterday also approved issuing a notice against temporarily suspended Mongla Customs House appraiser Mahfizur Rahman Babul asking him to submit statement of wealth to the commission.

More lawmen

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within two years is a blow to our honour and dignity, as we've come to serve the state for five years leaving our independent practice and seniors' chambers," an attorney said.

The law officer added Fida M Kamal resigned from the constitutional post for some specific reasons, including making a joint secretary the director general of the Government Attorney Department.

He said the attorneys are all practising lawyers. "A joint secretary has been appointed as the boss of the law officers. A bureaucrat cannot be our boss."

The government has yet to appoint anyone as the attorney general. Additional Attorney General Munzir Habib told The Daily Star last night that the government even didn't assign the charges of AG to anyone.

Usually the senior most additional attorney general gets the charges in absence of the attorney general.

Sources say if the government doesn't appoint anyone as the attorney general right now, it will appoint an additional AG as the acting AG.

The AG office has two additional AGs -- Salahuddin Ahmad and Munzir Habib. Of them, Salahuddin is senior as he had joined in this post before Habib.

Meanwhile, Law Adviser AF Hassan Arif yesterday termed Fida's resignation a "great loss".

"It's a great loss to me," Arif told journalists. Arif also served as the AG during the BNP-Jamaat-led alliance government when Fida was an additional AG.

Fida tendered his resignation from the AG post when he had an over five-hour-long meeting with the law adviser at his ministry.

Though Fida has showed "personal" reason for his resignation he, in fact, had a long discord with the government over several issues.

Horror still haunts

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infamous outlawed party Janojuddho, the situation seems to have improved a bit and an increased number of people whose relatives were murdered by the outlaws have been turning up to file cases with the police.

The three Janojuddho leaders who were killed last month are its chief Abdur Rashid Malitha alias Tapon alias Dada Tapon, his brother and second-in-command of the outfit Golam Hossain Akash alias Kaitha Akash and regional leader Abdur Rashid Tikka.

To make the best use of the improved scenario, the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) started a massive campaign, urging locals to come forward and join hands with the crime busters to nail the outlaws still at large.

Two meetings titled 'Opinion Exchange Meeting to Create Mass Awareness for Rooting Out Terrorism' were held yesterday at the premises of NM Pilot High School at Kumarkhali, Kushtia and at Shaillakupa Government Degree College, Jhenidha.

Rab Director General (DG) Hasan Mahmood Khandkar, commanding officers of Rab battalions concerned, deputy commissioners, superintendents of police (SP), local dignitaries and a number of family members of the victims addressed the meetings.

The locals and families of the victims attending the meetings requested the Rab officials to crack down on the political godfathers of the outlaws as well, saying that the political godfathers of the outlaws have been harbouring the criminals for a long time.

A few other speakers urged all not to cast their vote for those who are abettors of the outlaws and criminals.

Tahmina, daughter of slain Ganna union parishad chairman Sharafat Hossain, told The Daily Star, "We could not even file a case against the killers of my father. My two brothers had to flee our home, fearing that they might also get killed -- just like my father was."

Janojuddho top brass Tapon's armed goons killed her father on February 19 at Kaluhati Bagdipara near Shailmaria Bazaar under Jhenidha Sadar upazila.

The Rab DG urged all to extend cooperation to law enforcement agencies, particularly the Rab, to uproot criminals from the society.

Delwar

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The BNP secretary general asked the caretaker government not to sign any transit accord, as "people would not accept it".

He also said the "government's repression on the people by keeping the state of emergency in place will be resisted".

Calling for unity among the people to resist any conspiracy against the nation, Delwar said the country's sovereignty must be protected with the spirit of the Liberation War.

The BNP leader accused the government of violating the constitution, saying that it wants to stay in power by misleading the people.

On resignation of the attorney general, he said barrister Fida M Kamal quit the office as he could not carry out his duty for long under pressure.

Other government law officers are also working under pressure, otherwise they will lose their jobs, he said.

The BNP secretary general announced "human chain" programme across the country on July 22 to press for release of political detainees including BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

He also demanded immediate release of Tarique Rahman for his medical treatment abroad.

On July 28, the alliance will stage countrywide "indoor rallies" to protest the Election Commission's various decisions and actions.

Jamaat Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed sought the UN secretary general's intervention to refrain India from pressing for transit from Bangladesh.

He alleged that New Delhi was trying to indulge in internal political affairs of Bangladesh and putting pressure on Bangladesh to sign a deal, which is against the country's independence and sovereignty.

BNP leaders RA Gani, Chowdhury Tanvir Ahmed Siddique and Selima Rahman, City Jamaat Ameer Rafiqul Islam Khan, IOJ Secretary General Abdul Latif Nezami, BJP Secretary General Shamim Al Mamun, Khelafat Majlis President Ahmed Abdul Qadir also spoke.

Lotus Kamal

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two daughters with Gulshan Police Station for concealing information regarding Tk 2,99,55,658 in his wealth statement submitted to the ACC.

Barrister Rafique-ul-Huq appeared for the petitioner.

Since the inception of Rab, at total of 416 'suspected criminals' including outlaws have been killed in 10 southwestern districts in the country. Of them, 177 were killed in Kushtia alone.

21 Indian cops

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inflicted on the overstretched and poorly-trained security forces operating in the east coincided with a fresh government effort to come up with ways to tackle the rebellion.

Indian Home Secretary Madhukar Gupta told reporters Wednesday's meeting would lead to the creation of new, specialised commando units to be deployed in the worst-hit Indian states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa.

"Moreover the home