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Zillur accuses govt of double standards in freeing leaders

UNB, Dhaka

The Awami League's (AL) acting President Zillur Rahman yesterday accused the government of double standards when it comes to arresting and releasing political leaders.

He demanded immediate unconditional release of senior AL leader Engineer Mosharraf Hossain who was rearrested at jail gate on August 1 soon after his release from Kashimpur jail on bail.

"Under whose influence, war criminal Motiur Rahman Nizami was released? How come the minister of the most corrupt ministry of the last BNP government, Mannan Bhuiyan, come out of jail?" he asked at a press conference at his Gulshan residence.

"BNP leaders M Shamsul Islam and MK Anwar were also released on bail," he added.

Nine months into his arrest without any case, the High Court declared detaining Mosharraf

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Poll spending crosses limit by wide margin

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Campaign expenditure of most mayoral and councillor candidates, especially of politically nominated ones, doubled the limits by the time electioneering in Rajshahi metropolis ended at zero hour Sunday.

The mayor hopefuls in Rajshahi City Corporation were set to spend Tk 5 lakh and councillor aspirants Tk 1 lakh during campaigns.

But reports say mayor candidates spent even Tk 12 lakh to Tk 20 lakh each, while several councillor aspirants spent at least Tk 5 lakh.

Speaking anonymously, a num-

ber of candidates' polling agents admitted the fact and said real expenditure would be even higher due to rampant distribution of money among the poor voters.

Many voters also believe though the spending was much "less" than that of previous elections, the candidates exceeded the limits fixed by electoral laws.

Under the new law, all candidates will have to submit returns of their election expenditure in prescribed forms 30 days into election results.

Although the electoral rules made it mandatory to spend from dedicated bank accounts, some of

the candidates avoided it.

Moreover, many others showed obscure sources of their probable expenditure in their affidavits, while some showed grants from friends and relatives and bank loans.

The mayor hopefuls show a common expenditure of around Tk 4.2 lakh spent for running campaign through at least 30 election camps at 30 wards. They spent as low as Tk 2,000 on each camp every day.

Besides, they spent Tk 90,000 for canvassing through loudspeakers on three-wheelers in 20 days of campaign.

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Extortion case proceedings against Hasina adjourned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special court yesterday adjourned trial proceedings of the Tk 2.99 crore extortion case against former premier Sheikh Hasina and her cousin former state minister Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim till August 18.

Judge M Ashraf Hossain of Special Court-5, set up on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises, fixed the date for resumption of taking deposition of the prosecution witness and complainant Azam J Chowdhury following the time prayer filed by the prosecution.

On July 27, the court fixed yesterday for taking his deposition. Azam J Chowdhury, Managing Director of Eastcoast Trading Pvt Ltd, filed the case with Gulshan Police Station against Hasina and Selim on June 13 last year on charge of extorting Tk 2.99 crore from him

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DAB leader Zahid fired

STAR REPORT

Former professor of Dhaka Medical College Hospital Dr AZM Zahid was dismissed from service yesterday.

Zahid, also former secretary general of Bangladesh Medical Association, was awarded 13 years' rigorous imprisonment in a corruption case on May 25. He is now on the run.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) filed the case with Ramna Police Station on October 13 last year in connection with concealing wealth information in his wealth statement submitted to the ACC.

Zahid, secretary general of a pro-BNP doctors' organisation, was sacked from his job under section 3 (1) of The Public Servants (dismissal on conviction) Order, 1985. The health secretary issued the order.

His dismissal however will be effective from May 25, 2008, the day he was convicted.

A costly game

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After a long 19 days of duel with death, the little schoolgirl from Keraniganj finally gave in to her burn injuries early yesterday morning amid all the groaning and squealing at burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Eight-year-old Rehamoni was electrocuted by high-voltage power lines while she was playing on a rooftop of a two-storied building near her house. Her untimely death comes as a wake up call to city residents who sometimes have to leave their children unattended.

"How can I go on without her now? Why didn't Allah take my life instead of hers?" said Reha's wailing mother Chandra Banu, sitting next to her daughter's lifeless body at the DMCH burn unit.

Reha's two sisters and two

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Sylhet voters happy with preparations

ASHEFAQ WARES KHAN and IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Although the metropolis was not overwhelmed by election euphoria even until yesterday voters interviewed by The Daily Star said preparations so far "seem to be fair".

Most also said they would vote for 'pineapple', Kamran's ballot symbol, or expect a Kamran landslide.

Kamran's closest competitors BNP-backed MA Haque and expelled BNP candidate AFM Kamal have split BNP loyalists, weakening each other.

BNP ally Jamaat-e-Islami has also abstained from backing either Haque or Kamal despite holding a meeting last night to decide on the matter.

However, the possibility of Kamran being convicted of corruption has kept professional bodies like Sylhet Chamber of Commerce or Sylhet District Bar Association away from endorsing a candidate.

But 31 cultural organisations backed Kamran yesterday.

Meanwhile, the government's experiment of enforcing new election laws relied heavily on fear of

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Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa welcomes Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed to the Sri Lankan parliament building yesterday after the 15th Saarc Summit concluded in Colombo.

PHOTO: PTD

ILL-GOTTEN WEALTH ACC presses charges against Khaleda's nephew Tuhin

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday pressed charges against detained former premier Khaleda Zia's nephew Shahrin Islam Tuhin and Awami League (AL) presidium member Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury's son Shahdab Akbar in separate cases filed for amassing wealth illegally.

Meantime, a Dhaka court issued arrest warrant against Jubo League President Jahangir Kabir Nanak in a case filed for accumulating wealth worth Tk 18 lakh illegally and giving

false information in the wealth statement submitted to the commission.

CASE AGAINST TUHIN

ACC Assistant Director Towfiqul Islam, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court in a case filed for amassing wealth worth Tk 65 lakh illegally and giving false wealth information to the commission.

The IO prayed for issuing arrest warrant against Khaleda's nephew

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2 killed in 'shootouts'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A close aide to top criminal Emon was killed yesterday in a shootout between his cohorts and Rab-2 in the capital's Mohammadpur.

The dead was identified as Jahidul Islam Manik alias Boro Manik, 35.

Meanwhile, a notorious criminal was killed in shootout between his accomplices and police in Jhenidah.

Rab-2 said acting on a tip-off, a Rab team took position at the Dhaka Udyan at Mohammadpur to arrest the criminals at around 1:00am.

Sensing the presence of the Rab members, the criminals opened fire on the law enforcers prompting them to retaliate, Rab officials said.

Manik was killed on the spot while his cohorts managed to

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Traffic in city gets standstill

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

City dwellers yesterday experienced severe traffic jams across Dhaka causing delays in reaching their destinations.

The sufferers said hundreds of vehicles remained stationary on city streets including streets near Shahbagh, Banglamotor, Farmgate, Mohakhali, Moghbazar, Paltan and New Market.

According to witnesses, tailbacks were seen several times yesterday from Motijheel to Mohakhali via Jatiya Press Club, Shahbagh and Sonargaon and Farmgate intersections on the Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue. The scenario was the same in Moghbazar, Jatrabari, Sayedabad, New Market,

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PHOTO: STAR

Violating the rules for poster size, a Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) councillor aspirant, top, hangs posters printed on plastic paper. An RCC mayor candidate uses large replicas of his electoral symbol while another goes even further by using coloured ones.

JAIL KILLING CASE Seven lawyers appointed state counsels

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has appointed seven lawyers as state counsels for conducting the Jail Killing Case in the High Court (HC) on behalf of the family members of the four national leaders killed in Dhaka Central Jail in 1975.

The lawyers are Anisul Haq, Nurul Islam Sujon, Mosharraf Hossain Kajal, ASM Rezaul Karim, Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, Mottaj Uddin Mehedi and Mottahar Hossain Saju.

The law ministry issued a letter appointing the lawyers on July 30.

Four years after the trial court's delivery of judgment, hearing of

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145 killed in Indian temple stampede

AFP, Shimla

Thousands of panicked pilgrims stampeded yesterday at a remote mountain-top temple in northern India during celebrations to honour a Hindu goddess, sending dozens of people plummeting to their deaths and trampling scores more. Police said 145 people were killed.

The Press Trust of India news agency said 145 people had died and 50 were injured.

The accident took place at the famed Naina Devi temple, situated about 150 kilometres (90 miles) from state capital Shimla and where tens of thousands of people have been gathering for the festival that began Saturday.

The stampede occurred after a railing at the popular shrine collapsed under the weight of devotees, sending many people falling down a narrow, steep staircase leading to the hilltop temple. A major panic and crush ensued.

The bodies of devotees were piled up on the road leading to the temple, witnesses said.

Police said nearly 50,000 worshippers were expected daily during the week-long festival, but many more had turned up on Sunday, leading to a massive rush at the pilgrimage centre in the foothills of the Himalayas.

Many of the deceased were from neighbouring Punjab state and had already been taken to their home state when police arrived at the scene.

Additional police from Punjab had been requested to help at the site, where relief work was hampered by rain.

Television pictures showed that the temple - where pilgrims offer prayers to the goddess Nanda Devi - was massively overcrowded.

"A lot of people were confined in a small area," said district deputy commissioner CP Verma.

Temple crushes are common during festivities in India, where crowd control management is often rudimentary at best.

Six people died in a similar accident at a popular Hindu festival in July in the eastern state of Orissa, where about a million

people had gathered in Puri town for an annual celebration.

In March, nine people were killed and many more injured at a religious gathering in central India when a railing broke at the temple premises, leading to a stampede among 100,000 devotees.

The Press Trust of India news agency and the private NDTV television channel both quoted local government officials as saying more than 130 people died.

At the Bilhaspur hospital, rescue workers unloaded the dead wrapped in brown blankets, laying out the bodies in rows so that relatives could identify them.

Verma said the stampede may have been sparked by rumors of a landslide, but it was made worse when too many pilgrims tried to squeeze onto the narrow path.

"At the moment our efforts are focused on rescue. Once that is complete we will investigate the cause," said Anurag Garg, another senior police officer.

Deadly stampedes are a relatively common occurrence at

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Prayer Timing		
August 4		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-20	4-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-47	6-50
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation