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## Khaleda's brother freed on bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shamim Iskander, younger brother of detained former prime minister Khaleda Zia, was released on bail from Dhaka Central Jail yesterday.

DIG (Prisons) Major Shamsul Haider Siddiqui told The Daily Star that he was freed from the jail in the morning as he secured bail from the High Court.

On July 18, the joint forces arrested Shamim Iskander, former flight engineer of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, when he came out of Khaleda Zia's Shaheed Mainul Road residence in Dhaka Cantonment after visiting his ailing nephew Arafat Rahman Koko, now in Bangkok for treatment.

On May 5, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) filed a case with Ramna Police Station against Shamim Iskander and his wife Kaniz Fatema for concealing information about wealth worth Tk 20.47 lakh in the statement submitted to the ACC.

## Nasim's release delayed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite a High Court order for releasing detained Awami League Presidium Member Mohammad Nasim on bail, a confusion among jail officials has already stalled the release for four days.

The jail officials became confused about the detained former home minister's bail after a news report had been published yesterday about the release of six prisoners from Chittagong Central Jail on August 7, based on fake bail orders.

Deputy Inspector General of Prisons (DIG Prisons) Maj Shamsul Haider Siddiqui told The Daily Star last night, "Until we verify the bail order, we cannot release Mohammad Nasim, as there are examples of releasing prisoners based on fake bail orders."

"We will verify the bail order after the High Court re-opens on August 18," the DIG said, although he had told The Daily Star on Thursday night that they had already received all the papers regarding Nasim's bail and that he would be freed by Friday.

Meanwhile, family members of Nasim expressed their worries and said they are frustrated by the jail authorities' dillydallying in releasing him.

Nasim's elder son Tanvir Shakil Joy told The Daily Star last night, "The DIG Prisons had assured us this morning that my father would

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## Shahara Khatun barred from flying abroad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League law Affairs Secretary Shahara Khatun was barred from flying to Japan by intelligence personnel at Zia International Airport (ZIA) last night.

Sources said she was supposed to board a Singapore Airlines flight at 11:55pm on way to Japan to attend the National Mourning Day programme organised by the AL leaders there.

Talking to The Daily Star, Shahara Khatun said, "Minutes before the flight took off, some people identifying themselves as members of an intelligence agency barred me, saying they don't have clearance for my departure."

Terming it harassment to her, she said her luggage was already in the aircraft and it was returned later.

Prayer Timing		
August 16		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-25	5-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-38	6-41
Esha	8-00	8-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		

# Maoist leader elected new Nepali PM

AFP, Kathmandu

Lawmakers in Nepal yesterday voted in former rebel Maoist leader Prachanda as the Himalayan country's first republican prime minister, officials said.

The vote in Nepal's constitutional assembly ends months of political deadlock that followed the sacking of unpopular king Gyanendra and the abolition of the 240-year-old monarchy.

It also clears the way for the ultra-leftists -- still listed by the United States as a terrorist organisation -- to press ahead with their vow to radically reform one of the world's poorest nations that was devastated by a decade of civil war.

Prachanda was backed by 464 deputies, with 113 against, constitutional assembly chairman Subash Nemwang announced.

His only rival was Sher Bahadur Deuba, a three-time former premier and member of the centrist Nepali Congress party.

Assembly members cheered,



Prachanda

clapped and banged their desks after the results were announced. "I am very happy and very emotional," a visibly overwhelmed Prachanda told reporters as he left the assembly.

The charismatic former warlord had dozens of orange garlands and silk scarves offered by supporters

around his neck, and his forehead was entirely covered in red powder from traditional blessings.

Prachanda, 53, led a decade-long insurgency to overthrow the monarchy -- a war which cost at least 13,000 lives and shattered the landlocked country's mainly-agricultural, subsistence-based economy.

He signed a peace deal with mainstream parties in 2006, vowed to renounce violence and steered his party to victory in elections to a new constitutional assembly in April.

Maoist number-two, Baburam Bhattarai, hailed a "golden dawn" for Nepal.

"We have already finished destroying the roots of feudalism in Nepal, the monarchy. Under the leadership of Prachanda, the main agenda of the new administration will be nationalism, republicanism, economic and social transformation," he said.

Born into a high-caste but poor

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PHOTO: STAR

Large breads are being sold at shops in Old Dhaka yesterday on the eve of Shab-e-Barat. The prices of the breads were between Tk 160 and 180 depending on their size and quality.

## Delwar sees no contradiction

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday said they do not undermine Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's contribution to the country's independence and that they never belittle the mourning day by observing BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's birthday on August 15.

"Sheikh Mujib has a lot of contributions to the country's independence...We think every leader should be recognised according to their contributions to the independence," Delwar told reporters outside the makeshift jail at parliament building complex where he went to present a bouquet to Khaleda on her birthday.

In reply to a question, Delwar said he does not see any contradiction to observing the BNP chairperson's birthday and the mourning day to commemorate Bangabandhu's assassination on August 15, 1975.

He demanded immediate release of Khaleda and her eldest son Tarique Rahman. He said a few political leaders have been released although there are a number of cases against them but

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# Woes of hundreds in four border villages in Sylhet

Sand and stones from hills across the border bury their homes, cropland and ponds

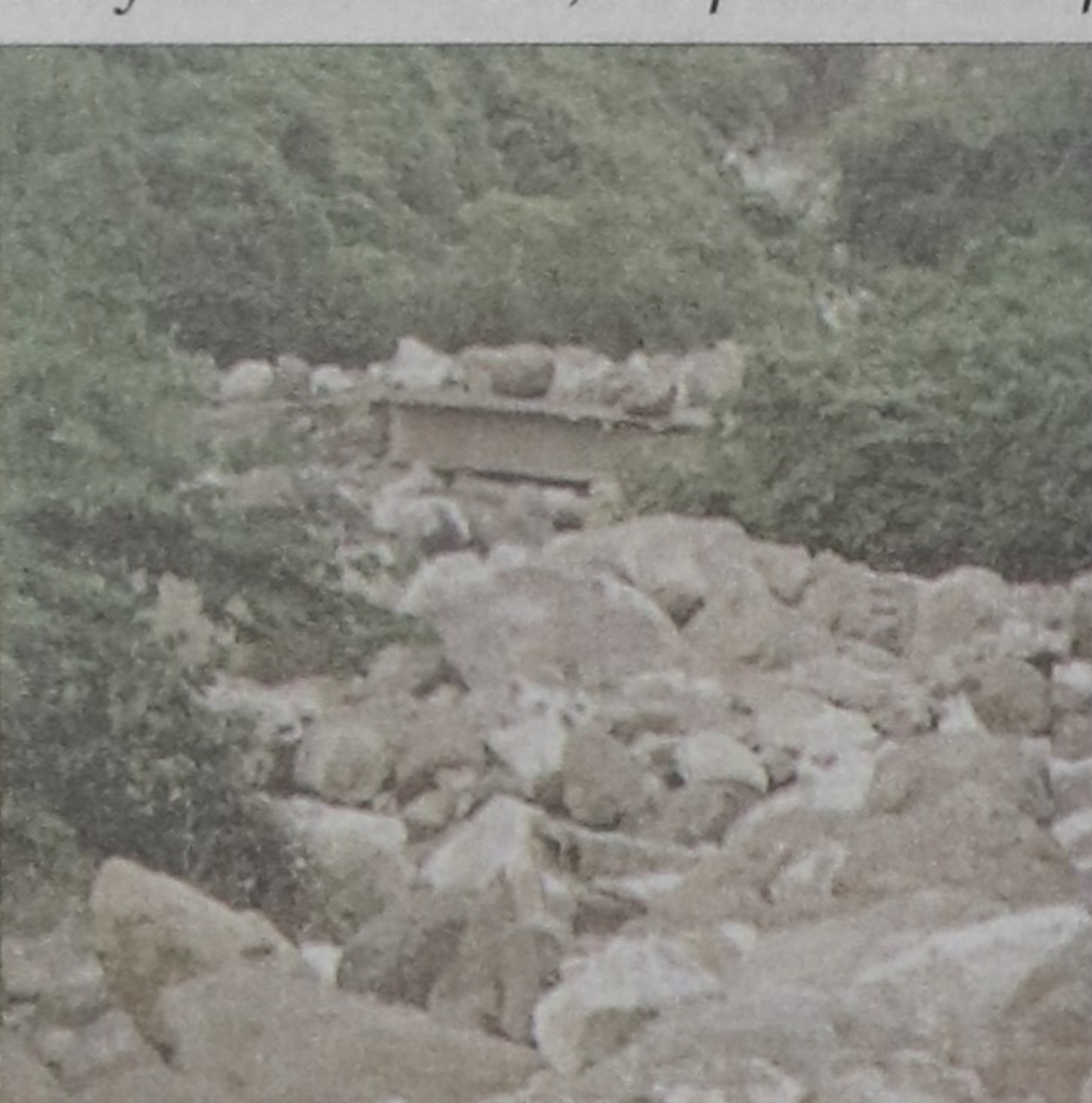


PHOTO: STAR

Excessive rainfall-caused landslides in the hills of Meghalaya in India send sand and rocks across the border into villages near Tahirpur in Bangladesh causing havoc.

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Hundreds of families in four villages on Tahirpur border in Sunamganj are fearing further disaster after sand and stones from landslides in India's Kalapahar hill following torrential rains played havoc with their houses and croplands last month.

Rains are likely to continue intermittently till mid-October in the area.

More than 600 people in the two most-affected Chandpur Noyachhara and Rajanline villages have been made homeless in the July 20-23 driving rains and intermittent downpour that followed.

Some 30 tubewells have gone out of order and 50 small ponds are now thick with sand. About 500 acres of farmland lie under 2-3 feet of sand and stone. The mosque and Gano Shikha Kendra at Chandpur Noyachhara had to be closed.

Some parts of the two villages remain inundated with stagnant water. The border road from Laurer Garh to Takerghat has been badly

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# Peace talks with Pakistan under threat, says India

AP, New Delhi

India's prime minister said yesterday that the peace process with Pakistan was in danger of failing because of attacks like last month's bombing of New Delhi's mission in Afghanistan.

India and Afghanistan say Pakistan's powerful Inter-Services Intelligence agency orchestrated the attack, which killed 58 people. Islamabad denies playing any role but has promised to investigate the allegation.

"If this issue of terrorism is not addressed, all the good intentions that we have for our two peoples to live in peace and harmony will be negated," Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said in an Independence Day speech. "We

will not be able to pursue the peace initiatives we want to take."

Hindu-majority India and Muslim Pakistan were born during the bloody partition of the subcontinent at independence from Britain in 1947. The split sparked one of the most violent upheavals of the 20th century and created a rivalry that has led to three wars.

But relations between the nuclear-armed rivals have improved considerably since the start of a peace process in 2004, and India's leader has pledged to continue the talks despite the allegations of a Pakistani role in the embassy attack.

"I have personally conveyed my concern and disappointment to the government of Pakistan," said Singh, speaking from behind a

bulletproof screen atop the ramparts of the historic Red Fort, the massive 17th-century sandstone palace built by the Muslim Mogul emperors who ruled much of India before the British arrived.

India also accuses Pakistan of playing a role in more than a dozen bombings that have hit India in the past three years, and the two sides have blamed each other for a surge in shootings across their heavily fortified de facto border in Kashmir, the divided Himalayan region at the centre of their rivalry.

The latest reported shooting the 20th so far this year came Friday when India said its forces along the frontier, called the Line of Control, were fired on by Pakistani forces armed with

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