

BNP-govt ties

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Earlier, Major (ret'd) Hafizuddin Ahmed, a pro-reform leader and acting secretary general appointed by the standing committee at a controversial meeting on October 29 last year, had been invited by the commission to the dialogue on electoral reforms.

The pro-Khaleda faction had been left out at that time.

In another development, party sources say, well-wishers of the Zia family and the BNP faithful from abroad have expressed readiness to bear the cost of overseas treatment for Tarique.

There have been offers of help from Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, the United States and some European nations.

Tarique, also senior secretary general, might in the end opt for Germany, said a highly placed source.

Khaleda's younger son Arafat Rahman Koko, who was released last month on executive orders, is now in Bangkok for treatment.

Arrested in March last year, Tarique has been undergoing treatment at a prison cell of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) Hospital.

If he is finally released and allowed to leave the country for treatment, it is quite unlikely that he will return home in the near future, a source close to the Zia family told The Daily Star last night.

Tarique has been granted bail in all 13 graft and extortion cases filed against him. Trial of the cases will continue like the way it is going on in the case of Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina.

"So far, we have got seven bail orders in hand. We hope to receive the rest by Sunday afternoon," Deputy Inspector General of Prisons Major Shamsul Haider Siddiqui told The Daily Star.

He added that the jail authorities will not delay Tarique's release once they receive the necessary papers.

One of the two major parties that dominate the country's political landscape, BNP has been in a shambles with most of its top leaders behind bars on graft charges.

According to some sources, it would join the dialogue and participate in both upazila and parliamentary elections following the release of Khaleda and Tarique.

The party boycotted the recent polls to four city corporations and nine municipalities, and has been strongly opposed to the plans for upazila polls before the national election under the state of emergency.

However, it might have a drastic shift in its stance on the election and dialogue now that release of its chairperson and senior joint secretary general seems in sight.

Sources in the administration said the government led by Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed is keen to ensure participation of all major political parties in the long-stalled parliamentary election planned for the third week of December.

As part of the efforts to that end, it has been trying to bridge the gap with BNP, whose participation is crucial to acceptability of the election.

Khaleda Zia, who has been detained in a sub-jail on Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban complex since her arrest in September last year, will leave for Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah within a couple of days of her release, her close aides said.

Before flying for the Middle Eastern country, she will stay at her cantonment residence.

"She is not going to be abroad for a long time," said a source in regular contact with the Zia family.

The first thing she would do is bidding to unite the party factions. Expulsion orders of former secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and ex-whip Ashraf Hossain might be scrapped to help regain unity, continued the source.

On return home, she will meet the rank and file in efforts to boost their morale.

The chairperson will also have to deal with Delwar issue. A good number of leaders do not want him to continue as the secretary general since they say he has failed miserably to keep the party united. She too is frustrated with his role in her absence, observed the source.

Home secretaries

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office, officials said.

Apart from bilateral issues, the unresolved border-related issues, including Tin Bigha corridor and demarcation of the boundary, will also be discussed.

The Indian home secretary is scheduled to meet Home Adviser MA Matin tomorrow.

England clinch ODI series

AGENCIES, London

England produced another fine display under Kevin Pietersen's captaincy to beat South Africa by 126 runs in the third one-day international at The Oval and seal the one-day series on Friday.

Ian Bell (73) and Andrew Flintoff (78 not out) took England to 296-7 from 50 overs and South Africa were never up with the rate as they were bowled out for 170 with Patel taking 5-41 to cap a memorable match.

The result put England 3-0 up with only the matches at Lord's and Cardiff left.

Consolation win for Sri Lanka

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka beat India by 112 runs in the fifth and final one-day international at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo on Friday.

India, who clinched the series 3-2, were bowled out for 103 chasing a rain-revised target of 216 off 44 overs.

BRIEF SCORES
Sri Lanka 227-6 in 50 overs; India 103 in 26.3 overs

Tigers

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Mohammad Ashraf, Alok Kapali, Tamim Iqbal and Mehrab Hossain have shown good form but the bowling has struggled on batsman-friendly wickets.

But according to the captain, the wicket at the TOI ground will be tough to bat on as the wickets skids a bit.

For the hosts though, it's a tricky affair as some of their biggest names have been ruled out due to injury. Ricky Ponting (wrist) and Matthew Hayden (heel) are missing from the top order, while Brett Lee is sitting out of this series due to his personal issues.

Only Michael Hussey and Michael Clarke remain from the side that lost to Bangladesh in 2005.

Of thirteen ODIs between the two sides, Bangladesh have one that famous game in Cardiff.

Interim crop

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BR-5 on 0.15 hectare of land spending only Tk 3,000 on agricultural inputs this season. "I did not spend any money for irrigation and a little amount was spent on pesticides and for weeding purposes," he said.

Farmer Aminul Islam of Tekur in the same upazila said he produced 520kg of Jhapi spending only Tk 2,500 on his 0.15 hectare of land this season.

Solaiman of Banashbaria in the same upazila said he produced 240kg of BR-5 spending only Tk 800. He said in the Boro season he and other local farmers had to pay at least Tk 9,000 per hectare for irrigation alone whereas no irrigation expenditure is required for the local variety.

DAE officials say that almost all the farmers in the district earned more than Tk 2.25 lakh spending Tk 25,000 per hectare. They presume farmers of the district are going to earn an additional Tk 210 crore by cultivating the interim paddy.

Zia Hyder

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complications.

Cancer specialist Dr Zafar Mohammad Masud told The Daily Star that Prof Hyder has been under his supervision since he was diagnosed with lymphoma. "But he is critically ill at this moment because of old age complications," he said.

"I am worried about Prof Hyder's health as the 70-year-old man is not in a condition to stand the treatment for cancer. However, we are trying to give him the best possible treatment," Dr Masud added.

Prof Zia Hyder has made remarkable contributions to the neo-theatre movement in Bangladesh shortly after the country's independence. He initiated the foundation of Nagorik Natyasmradday in 1968. He was its president until September 1982.

Hyder has directed popular plays like 'Elebele', which received an award for the best production from Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy in 1978. He was awarded the Shaheed Munier Chowdhury Award last year for his contribution to theatre.

He has also written and translated a few plays.

It was because of Prof Hyder's hard work and determination that theatre was introduced as an academic subject at the university level in Bangladesh.

Prof Hyder has also penned several books on theatre like 'Theatre-er Katha', 'Stanislavski Obhinno Tatwa' and 'Natyakalay Bhiniya Ism O Epic Theatre', many of which are used as references by the theatre departments at the country's public universities and Rabindrabharati University in West Bengal, India.

Hyder joined the Department of Fine Arts of Chittagong University as an assistant professor in 1970 when theatre was introduced there at the MA level.

In a press release, Zia Hyder's brother Rashid Hyder yesterday urged all to pray for him.

Flood situation

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heavy rain yesterday.

The bulletin said water levels at 61 points the FFWC monitors have marked a rise while eight points marked a fall.

The bulletin also said the overall flood situation of the country is very likely to deteriorate in the next 2-3 days. The Brahmaputra-Jamuna will continue to rise in the next 2-3 days, the bulletin added.

Our correspondent in Sylhet reports: Excessive rain during the last three days and the surge of water from upstream inundated croplands in different areas of the district and the region.

Road links between parts of Moulvibazar and neighbouring Golapganj and Beanbazar upazilas in Sylhet snapped after Roads and Highways Department suspended two ferry services on the Kushiara Thursday evening.

Over 10,000 hectares of transplanted Aman and Aus paddy in the programme at the Shishu Academy yesterday.

The war hero said the trial of war criminals is necessary in order to establish justice in the society. "The process for the trial of war criminals began during the rule of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman but it was stopped with the murder of Bangabandhu. Ziaur Rahman then released all war criminals from jail and patronised them in politics," he said.

It is easy for the present caretaker government to start the trial of war criminals as it is not a political government, he added.

Renowned academician Prof Anisuzzaman urged all children to join Khelaghar because "it is a wonderful world where they can be free from all mental pressures".

"The activities of Khelaghar will help children become patriots," he said.

Prof Panna Kaiser, chairman of the Khelaghar committee for the conference, said it is a shame for the nation that the trial of war criminals is yet to begin even after 36 years of independence.

"This caretaker government must respond to the demand for the trial of war criminals as it has become a national issue," she said.

Committee Convenor Abdul Matin Bhuiyan, poet Nirmalendu Goon, Prof Niranjana Adhikari and Ganatantri Party President Nurul Islam, among others, addressed the programme.

Children from across the country and Khelaghar activists performed at a cultural programme and formed a human chain demanding trial of the war criminals.

Onrush of water from upstream coupled with heavy rainfall in the last four days aggravated the situation, the sources added.

Sources said Kollait union in Kalkamanda upazila, Duaz, Sukari, Sunai union in Aparap upazila and a vast area of Madan, Mohanganj and Khaliujuri upazilas have gone under 3-5 feet of flood water.

They said most of the houses in the Kalkamanda upazila Sadar have been inundated.

Thousands of hectares of newly planted Aman and vegetables have been damaged.

Road communications between Netrakona and Kalkamanda upazila Sadar, Khaliujuri upazila Sadar and Madan upazila Sadar have been disrupted since yesterday.

Our Nilphamari correspondent reports: About 50 houses and 50 bighas of paddy at Bhashanichar were swept away by floodwater yesterday. Twenty-five houses in Baishpukur char also went into the gorge of the Teesta.

Erosion also affected Jhansinheswar, Chhatunama and Bhendabari chars.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Dimla

upazila said dry food has been distributed among the victims of erosion at Bhashanichar.

Our Chittagong correspondent reports: Incessant rain disrupted city life yesterday.

Many areas in the city including low-lying areas became inundated over the last few days.

Forecasting Officer at the Patenga Met Office said 149.10mm of rainfall was recorded in 24 hours ending 3:00pm yesterday.

According to a weather forecast, light to moderate showers or thunderstorms accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to continue at most places in Chittagong division and neighbouring areas. Moderately heavy to heavy rainfall is expected at a number of places tomorrow.

War criminals

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FAO pledges

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the adviser said they have undertaken initiatives on the issues of food security while the country has already made some progress in developing saline water-resistant seeds.

FAO Country Representative Ad Spijkers was present at the meeting.

Verdict

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anti-liberation elements.

Addressing the function, Workers Party Politburo member Fazle Hossain Badsha demanded trial of the war criminals and urged all progressive forces to forge unity against the anti-liberation forces.

NAP district unit Secretary Mustafizur Rahman Khan presided over the discussion meeting.

Prices of several items

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onion saw a price rise of Tk 3-5 per kg in retail markets in the last four days.

Local variety of onion was selling at Tk 30-35 a kg yesterday as against Tk 30-33 and imported onion at Tk 23-27 per kg compared to Tk 20-24 four days ago.

Prices of onion usually go up on the eve of and during Ramadan every year due to its high demand, said onion traders at Karwan Bazar, a major kitchen market in the capital.

Aubergine, used as a popular iftar item, sold for Tk 30-40 per kg yesterday while the price was Tk 22-30 a kg four days ago.

Green chilli sold for Tk 60-70 a kg yesterday compared to Tk 50-60 four days ago.

Price of ginger rose by Tk 10 per kg. Both local variety and imported ginger was selling for Tk 80-90 a kg yesterday, rising from Tk 70-80.

Price of sugar rose by Tk 3-5 per kg in the last four days, and it was selling for Tk 37-38 a kg yesterday as against Tk 33-34 four days back.

In wholesale markets, its price rose by Tk 120-140 per sack (50 kg). A grocer at Karwan Bazar said he purchased a sack of sugar for Tk 1,730 yesterday while he had purchased it for Tk 1,590 four days ago.

Liquid milk of different brands also saw a price rise. It was selling for Tk 48-50 a litre yesterday against Tk 45-48 four days back.

Puffed rice sold for Tk 48-80 a kg, gram for Tk 55-60 and basmati for Tk 65-90 yesterday, showing no price rise.

Price of almost all varieties of rice however dropped by Tk 1-2 per kg in retail markets.

Coarse rice was selling for Tk 31-33 a kg yesterday. Four days ago, it

sold for Tk 32-33 per kg.

Prices of parija and BR-28 -- medium variety rice -- came to Tk 35-37 per kg yesterday against Tk 36-38 four days ago. Miniket, a fine variety rice, was selling for Tk 40-43 a kg yesterday.

Prices of non-brand edible oil dropped by Tk 4-5 per litre in the last two days.

Palm oil and super palm oil were selling for Tk 86-95 a litre yesterday while soybean oil sold for Tk 108-110 a litre.

Traders mentioned that fall of rice and edible oil prices in the global market contributed to their price fall in local markets.

Save buyers

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discussed, he said.

He proposed forming of a "dispute solving committee" like the urban development committee under the Building Construction Rules, 2007 to protect the interest of buyers or else the provision of punishment will not protect them.

Participation of representatives from the civil society, entrepreneurs, property buyers, utility service providing agencies and law experts must be ensured in the committee, he added.

Different government organisations like Rajdhani Unnayan Katripakha, Dhaka Electric Supply Authority and Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority will also have to be accountable for their negligence and non-compliance.

General Secretary of Institute of Planners of Bangladesh AKM Abul Kalam said the discussion on the provision of punishment can be held but the government should promulgate the ordinance.

Tea stall owner shot dead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Misceants shot dead a tea stall owner in the city's Kafur area yesterday.

Witnesses said local miscreant Rashed along with his three accomplices appeared at the tea stall of Rakib Hossain Abu, 28, at East Kaziapara at around 2:00pm and called him out of his shop.

They took Abu to a nearby lane, shot him in the chest and abdomen and left the scene.

Abu was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the on duty doctors declared him dead.

Locals said the killing followed an arbitration held the day before where Abu settled a dispute between a rickshaw owner and a pick-up van driver after the rickshaw was partially damaged by the pick-up van.

But the rickshaw owner was not happy with Abu's mediation as he got only Tk 300 as compensation, they added.

They further said Rashed, one of the killers, is a relative of the rickshaw owner and got angered at Abu's mediation.

Abu's cousin Mohammad Shohag said, "I was taking tea at the stall. Hearing gunshots, I rushed to the spot and saw Rashed firing at Abu."

BSF kills one in Benapole

A CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) shot dead a Bangladeshi cattle trader on Agrahat border here early yesterday.

The victim was identified as Amir Mollah, 40, son of Ruhul Ali Mollah of Agrahat village.

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) sources said the BSF troops of Jhaudanga camp opened fire on some cattle traders while they were returning home with cattle from India at around 4:00am.

Amir Mollah received bullets and died instantly while others escaped unhurt. The Indian border guards took away the body.

Lieutenant Colonel Badrul Alam, BDR commanding officer, Jessore, confirmed the incident. BDR sent a letter to its Indian counterpart protesting the killing and demanding return of the body.

A tense situation is prevailing along the border.

Female sleuths

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had been involved in the Brac Bank gold robbery in the capital. The women detectives first became friends with Moina, a woman suspect, which led to arrests of the rest of the suspects.

The AC also said they also unearthed the mystery behind the killing of Nazma, a doctor's wife, in the capital by becoming friends with Nargis, the extramarital lover of the doctor, Humayun Kabir.

The SWPC chief, however, said as a newly opened branch it is suffering from various problems including insufficient logistical support and a lack of accommodations.

Bimstec

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joint working group to consider all aspects including organisational structure, financing mechanism and staffing relating to the Bimstec secretariat.

Itefkar called for demonstrating necessary flexibility and mutual accommodation so that the Bimstec Free Trade Agreement (FTA), originally scheduled to come into effect by July 2006, could be concluded soon.

He said the FTA would be a "more meaningful instrument in contributing towards increasing intra-regional trade only if we are able to remove and dismantle all tariff and non-tariff barriers."

Bangladesh, he said, would announce a date for a trade-minister level meeting once the agreement is finalised. He asked the Trade Negotiation Committee to wrap up their negotiations at the earliest.

The meeting agreed to conclude the negotiations for the proposed FTA preferably before the New Delhi summit in November.

The adviser also suggested setting up a food bank among Bimstec countries on the model of a similar Saarc mechanism and called for a second Green Revolution to tackle rising food prices and food shortages in the region.

UNB added: Bangladesh has proposed direct road links connecting itself with Myanmar and Thailand.

Foreign Adviser Itefkar Ahmed Chowdhury made the proposal during meetings with Myanmar Foreign Minister U Nyan Win and Thai Foreign Minister Tej Bunnag in New Delhi yesterday, said a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Dhaka.

Delhi urged

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and said mutual cooperation could further be expanded across a broad front.

Itefkar and Mukherjee expressed happiness at the upcoming maritime boundary demarcation talks between the two countries scheduled to begin in Dhaka next month after more than 20 years.

The adviser expressed his deep sorrow at the devastation caused by floods in Bihar and underscored the need for working together to address damage resulting from natural disasters.

AL to change stance

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She might put pressure on the caretaker government for holding the parliamentary election by December before any other poll on her return, the sources said.

With the release of Hasina on June 11, the relationship between AL and the government had warmed up a little, and the party participated in the August 4 polls to four city corporations and nine municipalities in return, the sources added.

According to AL leaders, the party is not against Khaleda's release, but the way the government allowed BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami secretary generals Khandaker Delwar Hossain and Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojib to have about a 3-hour long political talk with her in jail was not at all fair.

The leaders observed that the government and BNP struck a deal for the release of Khaleda and her 'corrupt' son Tarique.

"Awami League never thought that the government would show its real face like that. We are very unhappy with the government's move of allowing Khandaker Delwar and Mojib to have a three-hour political talk with Khaleda," AL Presidium Member Motia Chowdhury told The Daily Star last night.

Certainly BNP negotiated with the government. When Sheikh Hasina is released, it becomes a deal, but when Khaleda Zia is released, it becomes a result of a democratic movement," quipped Motia alleging the government of protecting BNP from public wrath "incurred by their wide scale corruption and misrule".

The meeting among Khaleda, Delwar and Mojib proved that it is not AL but BNP which struck a deal with the government, said AL Acting General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam.

In the changing situation, AL presidium, the highest policy making body of the party meets today in Acting President Zillur Rahman's Gulshan residence to finalise fresh strategies.

The party will also hold its central working committee (ALCWC) meeting tomorrow in party chief Sheikh Hasina's political office in Dhaka.

In both meetings AL will elaborately thrash out its possible strategies for the aftermath of Khaleda's release.

In the ALCWC meeting the party is likely to decide on the next course of action, which might be a reversal from its earlier position on upazila elections, with a new rigid position for the parliamentary poll before the upazila ones.

Obama vows</