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Tarique freed on bail

May go abroad for treatment

M ABUL KALAM AZAD and
RASHEDUL HASAN

Tarique Rahman, a leading accused in corruption cases also elder son of former prime minister Khaleda Zia, was released on bail yesterday afternoon after 18 months of imprisonment on various charges.

He became a free man again with the withdrawal of prison guards at 4:30pm from a cabin of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) Hospital which had been used as a prison cell.

Tarique is among a dozen of high profile prisoners released either on bail or executive orders so far.

He will however remain in the hospital until leaving the country for a long stay overseas.

It was not confirmed immediately when and to where the senior joint secretary general of BNP will fly off, but party and family sources hinted that he might travel to London first for treatment.

They said Tarique has numerous offers from his loyalists and well-wishers living in different countries to host him.

Earlier, he got bail in all 13 cases against him and was supposed to be released on Tuesday.

But his much publicised release was delayed as the bail bond in a bribery case was not signed and delivered to the prison authorities within office hours.

Believed to be a political heir of Zia family, Tarique's release coincides with his mother Khaleda Zia's one year in detention in a make-



Zobaida Rahman visits her just-released husband Tarique Rahman at BSMMU with a flower bouquet yesterday.

shift prison on the parliament building premises.

Hundreds of activists, leaders, and supporters of BNP and its front organisations gathered at the hospital since morning with flowers and sweets to greet Tarique.

Some of them also carried pigeons to release into the sky, celebrating their leader's new-found freedom.

A smiling Tarique waved to the crowd from his third floor cabin window amid chants of slogans and cheers from his supporters.

He also sought blessings from his loyalists, in response to which many burst into tears praying for his quick recovery.

"We want you to get rid of the

repressive government," one supporter shouted out from the crowd.

Soon after Tarique's release, a group of BNP leaders including BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain, Tanvir Ahmed Siddiqui and Rizvi Ahmed entered his cabin and congratulated him with flowers.

"Tarique has been freed through the legal process. We are happy for that," Delwar told reporters before visiting Tarique in the hospital.

Coming out of the cabin, he said preparations were on to send Tarique abroad for treatment. But he did not elaborate.

Tarique's wife Zobaida Rahman also rushed to the hospital immediately after her husband's release.

She greeted him with a bouquet. Earlier, Tarique telephoned his wife and also talked to his daughter.

He will be under the supervision of BSMMU Hospital authorities from now on.

The BSMMU vice-chancellor requested the DMP commissioner to ensure Tarique's security.

A team of Tarique's relatives also engaged themselves in ensuring his security in the hospital.

Earlier the government had released Tarique's younger brother Arafat Rahman Koko on an executive order on July 17, who is now undergoing treatment in a Bangkok hospital. Koko is also facing two graft and an extortion cases.

Meanwhile, Khaleda got bail in two of the four cases against her.

Suffering from multiple physical ailments including spinal cord complications, Tarique is expected to travel to London first and then to Germany for treatment.

BNP sources said he might stay abroad for a long time.

DIG PRISONS
Deputy Inspector General of Prisons Maj Shamsul Haider Siddique came to block-D of the hospital apparently signalling Tarique's release. His arrival at 3:55pm evoked a wave of cheers among the waiting supporters.

Haider came out of block-D 30 minutes later and announced the release of Tarique.

"Tarique's release was delayed as we received one of the bail orders late," he said surrounded by a huge crowd.

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From arrest to release

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

March 7, 2007: Armed forces arrested Tarique Rahman at his mother ex-premier Khaleda Zia's cantonment house during the crackdown on corruption suspects.

March 12, 2007: Tarique was produced before the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka. The court sent him to Dhaka Central Jail. He was moved to the jail hospital for medical treatment later.

March 27, 2007: Harun Ferdousi, a businessman, filed an extortion case with Gulshan Police Station accusing five people, including Tarique and his close friend Giasuddin Al Mamun, of forcing him to pay them Tk 81 lakh.

Khan Mohammad Afab Uddin, managing director of Reza

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Mixed reaction among people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Many people yesterday welcomed the release of BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman saying this would end the existing unrest over his release while others said the government's ongoing anti-corruption drive seems to be doomed with Tarique's release.

Those who welcomed Tarique's release said they do not want to see innocent people being killed in the streets anymore falling victims to violent demonstrations over his release.

Following the release of Tarique, eldest son of detained BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, The DailyStar talked to people of different age groups and occupations including students, businessmen, small traders, rickshaw pullers,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Tac asks 11 govt officials to return Tk 5.69cr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Truth and Accountability Commission (Tac) has ordered 11 government officials as of September 2 to deposit to the state exchequer about Tk 5.69 crore, which they voluntarily admitted before the commission to having amassed by illegal means.

Sources said eight more government staff yesterday confessed to the Tac to having amassed illegal wealth worth over Tk 1 crore.

They include former divisional

forest officer of Chittagong Zafrul Hasan, a project director and a deputy project director of Chittagong Port Authority, a sub-registrar of the registry department, and a former chief engineer of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority.

Tac Chairman Justice Habibur Rahman Khan said the 11 absolution seekers are officials of the Roads and Highways Department, a sub-registrar from registry department and a chief engineer of

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ILL-GOTTEN WEALTH Arrest warrant against Justice Fazlul Huq

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued an arrest warrant against former caretaker government adviser Justice Fazlul Huq in a case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) for amassing illegal wealth worth Tk 89.81 lakh and concealing its information from the commission.

After scrutinising the case docket and other documents, Judge Mohammad Azizul Haque of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order.

The court directed the authorities concerned to send a copy of the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Jamuna embankment bursts in Bogra: 3,000 homeless

Several lakh still marooned in northern, central regions

STAR REPORT

Surging water of the Jamuna washed away a section of the flood-protection embankment in Sariakandi, Bogra flooding two villages. The flooding destroyed a number of houses displacing 3,000 people who feared that more areas would be inundated.

The flood-affected people have taken shelter in temporary flood shelters while many others are staying under the open sky on highways.

Many of them have become penniless losing their homes and

other valuables.

A few lakh people in northern and central parts of the country are still marooned and they lack drinking water, food and fodder for their livestock.

The flood situation improved in many places but waterborne diseases have started to spread where floodwater has receded.

In Manikganj, floodwater is flowing over the road between Aricha and Paturia threatening road communication between the capital and the southern parts of the country.

Water levels of different rivers,

except the Padma, have started to fall. The Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) yesterday said a number of areas in the central part of the country may be inundated.

Our Bogra correspondent reports: Nearly 120 metre of the flood protection embankment in Sariakandi upazila was washed away and instantly flooded two villages.

Quoting local union parishad chairman and the upazila administration sources, the report said around 3,000 people became homeless there.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



BNP activists loyal to Tarique Rahman assault reformist party leader Ehsanul Huq Milon, left, and Jubo Dal leader Barkat Ullah Bulu, right, when they went to BSMMU to visit Tarique yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

Govt's anti-graft drive lost its direction

Say 14-party leaders

UNB, Dhaka

Leaders of the 14-party alliance yesterday said the government's much-hyped anti-corruption drive has lost its direction with the release of BNP's Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman.

"Tarique Rahman's release has raised question in public mind about the existence of the rule of law in the country. The anti-corruption drive has fallen flat with his release," AL presidium member Amir Hossain Amu told the news agency last night.

He said the caretaker government assumed power with a promise to remove corruption from the country. "But Tarique's release proves that the government's words and deeds are quite opposite," Amu said.

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PROTEST AGAINST OUTAGE Power-loom workers go on rampage, set ablaze 12 cars

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hundreds of power-loom workers in Narsingdi forced into Chouala Palli Bidyut Samity-2 compound in protest at frequent power cuts, setting 12 vehicles on fire and damaging other valuables yesterday morning.

Around 700 workers rampaged through the power office at about 5:00am as production disruptions due to frequent power outages affected their wages, witnesses said.

The workers had been demanding uninterrupted power supply for the last two months. Earlier on August 24, they laid siege to the power office and put up barricades on Dhaka-Sylhet Highway to press

home their demand, sources said.

Locals joined in yesterday's vandalism in protest at load shedding during sheri, iftar and tarabi namaaj.

The police later brought the situation under control. "The attackers ransacked the office damaging furniture, fixtures and other valuables. They also set fire to nine motorcycles, two pickups and a jeep during the hour-long rampage," Syed Wahidul Islam, general manager of Palli Bidyut Samity-2, told The Daily Star.

He estimated the losses at around Tk 40 lakh.

"We're not sure who perpetrated the attacks and why. Vested

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

MIG-29 CASE Hasina's lawyers show no-trust in trial court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina's lawyers yesterday expressed no-confidence in the trial court of MIG-29 purchase case and applied for transferring the case to another court.

The move came as Judge Golam Mortuza Majumder of Special Judge's Court, Dhaka Division, did not entertain their petition seeking adjournment of the case proceedings.

Earlier on August 20, the court had framed charges against the former prime minister and five other people in connection with the case.

The defence in their petition said the proceedings should be adjourned so long as the higher court does not dispose of an appeal that they will file against the trial court's framing charges.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Party activists rough up Bulu, Milon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A number of activists of the BNP and its front organisations assaulted Ehsanul Huq Milon, Barkat Ullah Bulu and Bilkis Islam, known as leaders of the party's reformist faction, at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) Hospital yesterday.

Former state minister for education Milon and former lawmaker Bilkis were attacked when they went to the BSMMU around 1:30pm to join the celebration of Tarique Rahman's release.

BNP and Jatityabadi Chhatra Dal leaders started chanting slogans against Milon when they saw him at the BSMMU.

At one stage they started slapping, punching and kicking Milon. This went on for about half an hour.

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Pak PM escapes assassination bid

AP, AFP, Islamabad

Snipers fired on the motorcade for Pakistan's Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani yesterday as it drove to the airport to pick up the prime minister, striking his car window at least twice, officials said.

Neither the prime minister nor his staff were in the vehicles, but the assassination attempt comes as Pakistan's new civilian government - under pressure from American officials - is cracking down on Islamist militants after ousting Pervez Musharraf from the presidency.

At least two bullets hit the front window on the driver's side of Gilani's limousine on the main highway linking Islamabad with

the nearby city of Rawalpindi, officials said.

Zahid Bashir, the premier's press secretary, said unknown assailants fired "multiple sniper shots" in what he described as a "murder attempt."

Interior Secretary Kamal Shah said later, however, that the vehicles were attacked on their way to the airport to pick up the prime minister, who had been in Lahore, and that Gilani's plane had not even landed yet.

"The driver reached Islamabad airport, but the prime minister or his staff was not traveling in the vehicles," Shah said.

Television footage showed Gilani's black Mercedes parked at

BANGLADESHI WORKERS Kuwait to go tough on exploitation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Kuwaiti government will take stern actions against local companies who delayed or went back on agreed salaries for Bangladeshi workers there, the Gulf state's deputy prime minister told the visiting foreign affairs adviser from Bangladesh yesterday.

AFP meantime reports that Kuwait's parliament will hold an emergency session on September 10 to debate the violent protests by expatriate Bangladeshi workers which they say "undermined Kuwait's reputation abroad."

"The Kuwaiti government would take stern measures against the Kuwaiti companies who had

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