

Tarique obtains

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Tarique, the eldest son of detained former premier Khaleda Zia and senior joint secretary general of BNP, was released on bail after 18 months of detention.

Tarique's sister-in-law Shahina Khan Zaman told The Daily Star over telephone last night that the family was already in touch with different hospitals in England and Germany, including Hammersmith Hospital in London.

Tarique's physician Mazharul Islam, meanwhile, said Tarique got rid of the mental stress since being released.

Idris Ali under whose supervision Tarique is being treated said he has referred the BNP leader to get admitted to a London hospital.

A number of politicians, including Jamaat Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojahid, BNP leader MK Anwar, Islami Chhatra Shibir President Zahidur Rahman visited Tarique at the BSMU yesterday.

On Wednesday night, Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar and Deputy Speaker Akhter Hamid Siddiqui also visited Tarique at the hospital. They talked to him for a while and enquired about his health.

Shahbagh police have taken up the charge of Tarique's security. A team of police has already been posted in front of the BSMU cabin where he is staying.

The BNP has announced special prayer at mosques across the country after Jum'a prayers today.

Special prayer will also be offered at places of worship of other religions

for early recovery of the ailing BNP leader and secure the release of his mother, a BNP press release issued yesterday said.

Meanwhile, the government yesterday filed three petitions with the Supreme Court (SC) to stay the High Court orders that granted bail to Tarique who recently got released on bail in three cases.

Sources said the attorney general's office would move the petitions before the vacation bench of chamber judge of the Appellate Division on September 8.

Tarique's counsel barrister Nasiruddin Ahmed Asim yesterday told The Daily Star that the government's appeals for staying the HC bail to Tarique would not affect his release since the apex court had granted him bail on health and humanitarian grounds after examining his medical report prepared by a medical board.

He also said the government and the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) had earlier filed six petitions with the SC for staying Tarique's bail in separate cases but the chamber judge refused to grant their prayers.

Responding to separate bail prayers, the HC recently granted bail to Tarique in 12 cases filed by the ACC, the government and individual persons. Even the SC granted Tarique bail on August 28 in a bribery case, paving the way for his release.

Of the total 13 cases filed against Tarique, eight are for extortion and the rest for corruption, tax evasion and bribery.

Aug 21 attack

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with the Court of Metropolitan Sessions Judge of Dhaka.

Following an order signed on August 26 by the home ministry, Judge Mohammad Azizul Haque of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court transferred the cases to the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 where Mohammad Masdar Hossain is the conducting judge.

Earlier on August 31, the conducting judge fixed September 8 for hearing on charge framing against 22 accused including detained former BNP lawmaker Abdus Salam Pintu and Harkatul Jihad (Hujj) chief Mufti Abdul Hannan in the grenade attack case.

On the other hand, another Dhaka court the same day directed eight absconding Hujj members including brothers of Pintu to appear before the court by September 21.

Of the accused, Pintu, Mufti Hannan, his brother Mohibullah alias Shaifur Rahman alias Ovi, Shaifur Shahidul Islam alias Bipul, Maulana Abu Sayeed Alam Dr Abu Zafar, Abul Kalam Azad alias Bulbul, Jahangir Alam, Maulana Abu Taher, Shahadatullah Jewel, Hossain Ahmed Tamim, Mufti Moinuddin Sheikh alias Abu Zandalal alias Masum Billah, Arif Hassan Sunam, Rafiqul Islam Sabuj and Mohammad Ujjal alias Ratan were earlier arrested and are now in jail custody.

Pintu's brother Maulana Tajuddin, Maulana Liton, and Anisul Mursalin, Mahbul Muttakin, Iqbal, Maulana Abu Bakar alias Selim Howlader, Jahangir Alam Badar and Khalilur Rahman have been absconding since the cases were filed.

Eight of the arrestees -- Hannan, Bipul, Ovi, Abu Sayeed, Bulbul, Arif Hossain, Jahangir and Sabuj -- gave statements under section 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code confessing their involvement in the incident.

On June 11 this year, Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Assistant Superintendent Fazlul Kabir, also investigation officer (IO) of the cases, submitted the charge sheets to the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka, showing 412 people as prosecution witnesses.

A day after the grenade attack, the police filed two cases -- one for murder and another under the Explosive Substances Act -- with Motijheel Police Station.

"Again, we ask why do we need a director for administration? This is a useless post that is often misused by people who seek undue favours from employees for transfers and postings. We have been carrying out without any director operations for the last 10 years. Why do we need it now, especially when the organogram seeks structural reduction of Petrobangla's manpower?" he asks.

He goes on to say, "We need it because the Administration Cadre wishes to have a post in Petrobangla."

The government had demonstrated dynamism in the late 90's by abolishing the post of director administration and introducing the

Govt shut order

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the director administration." Speaking anonymously, a top energy ministry official defends the decision saying the director operation was good enough to look after the two mining companies, which are led by competent managing directors and strong boards of directors.

"This organogram was reviewed by the ministries of establishment, finance and energy. This decision was not taken overnight. Exercise related to the organogram is several years old. The wisdom is that the director operation is sufficient to deal with the mines," the energy ministry official points out.

"Besides, we are moving towards creation of Khani Bangla, a stronger body to deal with mines and minerals. In any case, we'll have to set that up to manage coal strongly," he adds.

The ministry is revising the draft coal policy that talks about Khani Bangla with a view to sending it to the cabinet for approval by early next month, he notes.

But his views are strongly opposed by Petrobangla insiders. "We don't have a Khani Bangla now. We don't even have an approved policy and if we had the policy approved soon, the Khani Bangla will not take off before 2011," says a Petrobangla official.

Petrobangla's Operation Director already deals with 12 other companies and is the busiest person in Petrobangla, especially as gas crisis has taken a permanent shape.

The sources say the director operations already holds five to seven meetings a day and would simply bog down with the new charges. "The mines will not get due attention," the official observes.

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The government had demonstrated dynamism in the late 90's by abolishing the post of director administration and introducing the

post of Director Production Sharing Contract (PSC) in Petrobangla to deal with oil companies working in the gas sector. A Chief of Personnel (COP) was carrying out the job of the director administration.

"Affairs related to transfers and postings in Petrobangla are so simple that a COP is enough for the job. The COP worked directly under the chairman," the official notes.

The mines and minerals directorate itself has a long history. Till 1985, the country had a Bangladesh Mineral Exploration Development Corporation (BMEDC) that did not have any mine, but just the prospects of some coal, limestone and other minerals in its vision. As the BMEDC was making no progress, the government merged it with Petrobangla.

Another Petrobangla official describes the new organogram that was approved earlier this week. "It outlines position of 652 officers and staffs and five directors. The total number of workforce is several dozens lower than the past organogram that was in force since 1989."

"The new organogram does not require retrenchment of manpower," he points out. "Petrobangla is already running short of manpower. There are vacancies for 56 officers."

Petrobangla will now recruit new officers and other staffs, he adds. **MINES AND PETROBANGLA'S STAKES**

Both the Barapukuria coalmine and the Maddyapara hard rock mine have numerous problems and both are incurring loss. Petrobangla also has many unsettled issues with the Chinese and North Korean builders with the two mines.

The Barapukuria mine was built under a Chinese Supplier's Credit worth Tk 1,430 crore and the Maddyapara mine worth another Tk 1,400 crore under another Supplier's Credit with North Korea.

The government has already cleared half of these loans, though the mines have come into partial operation only a couple of years ago.

"Though these are loss generating for now, they are giving us valuable experience which will help us move to bigger ventures in future," observes an official.

In addition to these two mines, Petrobangla also has a licence to explore the Dighipara Coal zone in collaboration with a strategic partner.

Dhaka seeks

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Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Sheikh Muhammed Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah was also present at the meeting.

Later, Iftekhar met Kuwaiti Minister for Social Affairs and Labour Bader Fahed Ali Al-Duwailah and discussed the matters relating to the problems of Bangladeshi workers in Kuwait.

"It was a most useful meeting and the minister assured me that the subject would be thoroughly examined with a view to resolving all outstanding issues," the foreign adviser told journalists.

He urged the social affairs and labour minister to lift the ban on transfer of residency and new visas. The minister assured the adviser that these would be taken up with the interior ministry.

The adviser said they also discussed speedy disposal of compensation cases.

On Wednesday, the foreign adviser held two rounds of meeting with Bangladeshis in Kuwait at Bangladesh embassy and at a local hotel and was also accorded a reception by them.

Hasina's parole

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completely lost hearing in the right ear and developed new eye complications.

Hasina has no possibility of regaining hearing in the right ear and needs to wear hearing aid in the other ear, Dr Lloyd B Minor at John Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore said, according to US-based news agency NewsWorld.

As to her eyes, Dr Harry A Quigley and Dr John Gates of the hospital diagnosed cataract and abnormal blood pressure during a seven-hour test.

They prescribed medicines for two weeks and would see in the meantime whether the former prime minister needs any eye surgery.

Her son Sajib Wazed Joy was present at the time.

Hasina flew to Washington DC from Canada on Tuesday for follow-up treatment.

Sircar

FROM PAGE 1
Sarkar has been seen attending a party convention and addressing party issues.

The discussion titled "BNP's Contribution in Building a Self-Reliant National Economy" was held at the Diploma Engineers Institute in city's Sakrail.

The Speaker said the government must hold the national election in December as per their commitment. He said that restoration of democracy in the country could solve all existing social, political and economic problems.

Without naming any particular party or person group, Sircar said, "If BNP comes to power again, it will be hard for them to dethrone BNP."

This is why a conspiracy from high-levels has created the present situation in the country to try and bar BNP from coming to power again, he said.

He said, "If the election is held on time, BNP is sure to come back to power."

"No one has the power to oust BNP except the people," he added.

Sircar praised the High Court for its independent dispensation of justice in releasing Tarique Rahman on bail. He also thanked the government for complying with the court's decision.

"As long as BNP exists, democracy will exist and as long as democracy sustains, BNP will exist," he said.

MK Anwar called on the caretaker government to release the BNP chairperson.

He said there have been some qualitative changes in the country over the last few days.

"The nation has turned into an election festive mood," he said, demanding that the upazila elections be held before the national election and the state of emergency be lifted.

Presided over by BNP standing committee member Dr RA Gani, the meeting was addressed, among others, by senior BNP leaders Chowdhury Tanvir Ahmed Siddiqui, Nazrul Islam Khan and Dr Mahmudur Rahman.

BNP secretary general Khandaker Delwar Hossain was also present at the event but did not address the meeting.

PDB graft

FROM PAGE 1
issued an order asking the PDB management to help the investigation team carry out their duties.

In dealing with PDB, the taskforces will focus their efforts on power generation. They will try to find out why the organisation performs abysmally in meeting the growing demand for electricity.

They will look into the power deals signed during the four-party alliance rule while sparing the cases older than 10 years.

At the meeting, the taskforce officials were given a presentation on operations and responsibilities of different organs of the biggest entity in power sector.

Beginning in the middle of last year, NCC taskforces have already exposed corruption in Rajuk, Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company, Dhaka City Corporation, Land Department, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital, and Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (Desa).

Pak govt protests

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important terrorist or high-value target" was killed.

"Innocent citizens, including women and children, have been targeted," Qureshi said. The ministry's spokesman said officials had no indication US forces captured anyone in the raid.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Mohammed Sadiq said Thursday the government had no information al-Qaeda leaders were in the area at the time. "If so, we would have taken action," Sadiq said, adding authorities had no indication US forces captured anyone in the raid.

A Pakistani army spokesman warned that the apparent escalation from suspected US missile strikes on militant targets along the Afghan border would further anger Pakistanis and undercut cooperation in the war against terrorist groups.

The operation came days before Pakistan's weekend presidential election and threatened to complicate an already difficult relationship between the two countries.

For months now, US commanders have pressured Pakistan to put more pressure on militant groups blamed for mounting violence in Afghanistan. That has stirred speculation that US forces might lash out across the frontier, despite the risk of angering Pakistanis.

Suspected US missile attacks killed at least two al-Qaeda commanders this year in the same region, drawing protests from Pakistan's government that its sovereignty was under attack. US officials did not acknowledge any involvement in those attacks.

The main ruling Pakistan People's Party is generally considered in line with US goals in the war on terror, but it has to tread carefully because of deep anti-American sentiment in the country. Many Pakistanis blame their country's partnership with the US in the war on terror for fueling rising militancy in their country.

People's Party leader, Asif Ali Zardari, the widower of assassinated ex-prime minister Benazir Bhutto, is the leading candidate in Saturday's presidential vote by lawmakers.

In a column for The Washington Post, Zardari described global terrorism as chief among the challenges facing his country. The column mentioned an apparent assassination attempt against Pakistan's prime minister on Wednesday but did not mention the earlier cross-border raid.

"We stand with the United States, Britain, Spain and others who have been attacked," wrote Zardari, whose wife was killed in a gun and suicide blast in December. Fundamentally, however, the war we are fighting is our war. This battle is for Pakistan's soul."

A lawmaker from the chief opposition party, that of ex-prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, on Thursday blasted the US for the attack.

"The American war against terrorism has become a war against Pakistan, and the killing of people by them at Angoor Ada is a clear example of it," Zafar Ali Shah said.

Shah said the Pakistani government should tell America that "enough is enough, and we will not help you if you kill our people."

Some administration officials have been pressing President Bush to direct US troops in Afghanistan to be more aggressive in pursuing militants into Pakistan on foot as part of a proposed radical shift in regional counterterrorism strategy, the AP learned. The debate was the subject of a late July meeting at the White House of some of Bush's top national security advisers.

Circumstances surrounding Wednesday's raid weren't clear, but US rules of engagement allow American troops to pursue militants across the border into Pakistan when they are attacked.

However, Pakistan army spokesman Maj. Gen. Athar Abbas said hot pursuit wasn't an issue, adding that the attack "was completely unprovoked." He said Pakistani troops were near the village and saw and heard nothing to suggest the US forces were pursuing insurgents.

The raid comes at a particularly sensitive time for the Pakistan government which is trying to overcome political divisions and choose a new president on the one hand, while the army is battling the militants on the other.

Abbas said the attack was the first incursion onto Pakistani soil by troops from the foreign forces that ousted Afghanistan's hard-line Taliban regime after the Sept. 11, 2001, attack on the US.

He said the attack would undermine Pakistan's efforts to isolate Islamic extremists and could threaten Nato's major supply lines, which snake from Pakistan's Indian Ocean port of Karachi through the tribal region into Afghanistan.

"We cannot afford a huge uprising at the level of tribe," Abbas told AP. "That would be completely counterproductive and doesn't help the cause of fighting terrorism in the area."

American officials say destroying militant sanctuaries in Pakistani tribal regions is key to defeating Taliban-led militants in Afghanistan whose insurgency has strengthened every year since the fundamentalist militia was ousted for harbouring bin Laden.

Citing witness and intelligence reports, Abbas said troops flew in on at least one big CH-47 Chinook transport helicopter, blasted their way into several houses and gunned down men they found there. He said there was no evidence any of the dead were insurgents or that the raiders nabbed any militant leader, but he acknowledged Pakistan's military had no firsthand account.

Ex-MP Salahuddin

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Sharif, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka showing 17 people as prosecution witnesses.

According to the case statement, Sub-Inspector Mozammel Haque of Shyamspur Police Station mentioned that they raided the former lawmaker's Kadamtali residence on November 22 last year and seized 424 corrugated iron sheets (CIS) meant for relief.

Salauddin Ahmed, who faces a number of cases, was sent to jail on February 12 last year after he surrendered to a Dhaka court in connection with an extortion case filed against him.

CASE AGAINST NOMAN
Judge Mohammad Azizul Haque of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order upon a bond of Tk 50,000 with two guarantors after Noman along with his lawyers appeared before the court and sought bail.

Earlier, another Dhaka court had cancelled bail and issued an arrest warrant against him as he has been absconding for long.

The Bac had issued a notice upon Noman asking him to submit his health statement on August 7, 1997 and he received the notice on October 26 the same year.

Later, a Bac official filed a case with Dhanmondi Police Station on August 19, 1998 on charges of not submitting his health report.

The investigation officer (IO) of the case submitted the charge sheet against Noman on May 30, 2000.

Upazila polls

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holding of upazila polls next month, arguing that this would hamper holding of parliamentary election, planned for December.

The EC however might formally announce its stance on upazila elections after wrapping up talks with the political parties on their registration, sources said.

The Election Commission has decided in principle to hold the upazila elections in between October 23 and 30. The election schedules are to be announced 42 to 45 days before the polling day. So, these will be announced very soon," EC Secretary Humayun Kabir told reporters replying to a query.

In the first phase, polls will take place in over 200 upazilas out of 482 in two days. Polls to remaining upazila parishes will be held after parliamentary elections.

In the news briefing, he said schedule for the long-due DCC polls will also be announced very soon as the polls will be held at the end of next month.

The final voter list for DCC areas with over 35 lakh voters was published yesterday. The EC will now begin printing it.

Asked if the worsening flood situation in many areas will hamper holding upazila elections next month, Humayun said the EC Secretariat has collected information about it. "We will submit a report to the commission so that it can decide where polls can be held."

Meanwhile, major political parties including Awami League (AL) and BNP are opposing upazila polls before parliamentary elections.

The AL, which will sit for dialogue with the EC on September 9, has already decided to ask it to hold upazila polls in December and parliamentary polls in November.

Invited for talks with the EC on September 7, BNP has not yet decided whether to join the talks or not. But senior leaders of the party said if they take part in the talks, they will oppose upazila polls before parliamentary elections.

But BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain has

formed a five-member committee headed by party standing committee member Chowdhury Tanveer Ahmed Siddiqui to draw up an agenda for the talks, party sources said.

EXPATRIATE VOTERS
The EC at an inter-ministerial meeting yesterday discussed ways to register Bangladesh citizens living abroad in the electoral rolls with photographs.

Officials present at the meeting said the EC asked them to send proposals to the law ministry to amend the electoral rolls ordinance paving the way for listing expatriate Bangladeshis as voters.

"It is difficult to say at this moment whether Bangladesh citizens living abroad can be registered as voters before the next parliamentary polls. But once the law is made, the way for expatriates to be registered as voters is cleared," the EC secretary told reporters yesterday.

Proposals for amending the electoral rolls ordinance 2008 would be sent to the law ministry next week.

Officials of the ministries of law, foreign, home and expatriates welfare and overseas employment attended yesterday's meeting held at the EC Secretariat.

Khaleda

FROM PAGE 1
"We are facing challenges to achieve our goals," Zillur said, adding that all the three parties -- the government, political parties and the people -- should play equal role to face the challenge and remove the concerns.

He said that the government's efforts in this regard would continue.

Zillur claimed that all the political parties agreed to take part in the parliamentary elections the government has promised to hold in the end of December. "It is the first step forward," the adviser said, adding that the second step is to bring qualitative changes in politics.

"Neither Grameenphone nor Telenor can, however, take responsibility for all social wrongdoings in Bangladesh, but we have taken our share of the responsibility to improve conditions with our suppliers and to work for long-term improvements in all the communities where we operate," she added.

According to Telenor, more than 160 Bangladeshi suppliers have so far been subjected to audits and been provided good practice courses.

On lifting of the state of emergency, Zillur said they are discussing ways to handle the emergency in a manner that serves the purpose of all people.

He assured that the parliamentary polls would be held in December as endorsed by the people. "There is no doubt about that," he said.

Law Adviser AF Hassan Arif and Communications Adviser Ghulam Quader were also present at the briefing.

Lankan troops
FROM PAGE 16
security forces capture the strategic town on Mallavi in the rebels.

The defence ministry described the capture of Mallavi as "one more decisive and impressive phase" in its campaign to defeat the Tigers, who have fought for decades for a homeland for minority Tamils in island's north and east.

The ethnic Sinhalese-dominated government has asked tens of thousands of Tamil civilians living in rebel territory to cross over to government-held areas in the island's north to avoid getting caught up in the crossfire.

The latest casualty figures raise the number of rebels reported killed by troops since January to 6,333. The military says 609 soldiers were killed during the same period.

Tens of thousands have died on both sides of the conflict in more than three decades of bloodshed.

Prof Yunus

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for creating a micro-credit system for people too poor to qualify for bank loans, holds a 38-percent stake through a subsidiary.

The Bangladeshi economist has long had a stormy relationship with Telenor, accusing it of breaching a deal concerning control of GrameenPhone.

He said Thursday he had received a call recently informing him of another child labour case involving a GrameenPhone supplier.

Telenor spokesman Paal Kvalheim confirmed that such a case existed involving a small company called Gazi Engineering, but stressed that the firm was "a supplier of a supplier."

"We have 700 suppliers in Bangladesh and we have concentrated on the ones with whom we have a direct relationship. But it is a known fact that child labour is widespread in this country," he told AFP.

He also pointed out that it was Telenor itself that had alerted Dr Yunus to the case.

Company executive Hilde Tonne meanwhile issued a statement insisting that "when we or others reveal unacceptable conditions further down the value chain, we will of course respond. We are now on to the case."

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Mayor Kamran

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The SCC mayor was arrested April 6 last year in the much-talked-about kitchen market scam case. He was released on bail on May 8 that year and joint forces arrested him again on May 28, 2007 at Sylhet city's Gulshan Hotel. A case was filed against him after recovery of a bottle of foreign liquor at his home that day.

Arrested in connection with violating the Emergency Power Rules, 2007 (EPR) he was issued detention on June 4, 2007.

He was in Sylhet Central Jail and in Comilla Central Jail for 15 months since then. He is facing four cases including two cases filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

The High Court division bench comprised of Justice Sharif Uddin Chaklader and Justice Emdadul Haque Azad on August 7 granted him bail in the ACC-filed case and in the case filed under the EPR. Proceedings of two other cases were stayed earlier.

The ACC on January 6 this year filed a case against Kamran and his wife Asma Kamran in connection with accumulating wealth worth Tk 2.16 crore illegally. Later investigation found the figure to be Tk 2.22 crore and that the couple had concealed their actual wealth to the ACC.

The