

Mosharraf's million

FROM PAGE 1

investigation against him. Investigators in the UK believe the assets they have traced represent proceeds of crime and were laundered by Mosharraf and Bilquis.

They have gathered much information about transactions in accounts that the ex-minister's wife and son have with various banks in London. Initially, the sleuths sought to identify whether the Mosharraf family own those in their names or those of third parties.

They collected banking records from HSBC Bank plc with regard to Khandaker Hossain and Bilquis Hossain, at Hendon Central Branch, London, NW4 3JU.

Later, they had copies of documentation in relation to four accounts with HSBC Bank plc.

Of those, account numbered 01340123 (Sort Code 40-03-26) was Bilquis's and the one numbered 01349090 (Sort Code 40-03-26) was her son Khandaker Maruf Hossain's.

"We have established that they have two sons, Khandaker Maruf Hossain and Khandaker Mahbub Hossain, both of whom have the same initials as their father KMH," a source quoted British investigators as saying in a report he has come by.

Bilquis opened hers in 2003 with an initial credit of £1000. But soon, she had over £3.94 lakh deposited in her name.

"There was no account activity until May 27, 2003, the account received a credit of £394,202.20 from an as yet unidentified bank account," read the report.

The current balance in the account is zero as the money was withdrawn at different times. The last withdrawal was made on May 24, 2007, when £60,839.74 was remitted to Janata Bank in Dhaka.

In 2004, Bilquis purchased a house in Kent (59 Hilda Vale Road, Kent, BR6 7AW) at £209,000. Her son Maruf remitted £212,000 from his HSBC account to UK law firm TG Baynes to fund the purchase.

Contacted via phone, Mosharraf told The Daily Star on Saturday evening that he does not know anything about the money laundering probe in the UK.

He claimed the money his family has there is neither illegally earned nor laundered.

He said he and his wife had separate accounts with HSBC Bank in London and a joint account with Lloyds.

Asked about the amount and source, he repeated what he said in the wealth statement to ACC.

About the house, he said, "I gave my wife the money to buy that house. Our son had nothing to do with the purchase."

He added that efforts are on to sell the house. However, the UK investigators have discovered that Bilquis sold the house in 2007. One Mohammed Abdul Rahman Miah bought it for £210,000 which is around £60,000 less than the current market price.

In the statement to ACC, Mosharraf said the money he and his wife had as FDR with the Lloyds Bank would be brought back once it gets matured.

He also said necessary steps had been taken to bring all the money back to Bangladesh by selling the house.

But, on November 27 last year, in an affidavit to the Election Commission as a candidate in the ninth parliamentary election he stated her wife has a flat worth Tk 2.87 crore in the UK.

In the ACC statement, Mosharraf said he has wealth worth over Tk 2.28 crore at home. As his sources of assets, he mentioned business, agriculture, remuneration as law-maker and minister, salary as a DU teacher etc.

His wife's wealth is worth over Tk 6.05 crore. She cited house rent, business, honorarium, apartment sale, fishery, remittance, return on bonds, etc as her sources of income.

Bilquis was a housewife before she took over the business responsibilities of her husband who got too busy as a lawmaker and minister in 2001-06.

An ACC official told The Daily Star yesterday that the wealth they found to have earned beyond Mosharraf's known sources of income does not include assets abroad.

A separate probe is on to find if he has any wealth stashed overseas, he added.

Explaining how they owned the property overseas, the couple told the ACC that they earned more than £100,000 by doing jobs during their stay in the UK between 1969 and 1975. Mosharraf went there for higher degree.

Before returning home, they invested the money with Lloyds TSB Offshore Private Banking at the Guernsey branch. They did it for higher profit, read the statement.

The return on their investment accrued over 18 to 19 years. But as stock markets across the world began to crumble in 1992-93, they had the money shifted to their main account with the bank.

The couple spent some of the money on their sons' study in the US and UK. They also opened a fixed deposit amounting to £250,000 in a joint account.

They said they also bought a house at Kent for £210,000 so that their daughter Mahzebin Khandaker Mohua could study in the UK living with her mother. Interestingly, the couple declares to ACC that they would accept whatever steps the National Board of Revenue (NBR) should take as per the law.

An NBR high official said such declaration might mean he had not mentioned some of his wealth in earlier tax returns.

He might be talking about his wealth abroad now to be spared prosecution. In that case, he had committed three offences—concealing information and income and evading tax, added the NBR official speaking to this correspondent in return for anonymity.

The ACC official who would not be identified talking about the issue also said that the ACC investigation found that his tax returns mention nothing about his assets abroad.

Mosharraf however claimed that he and his wife declared so because they do not know how the assets to be brought back would be treated in legal terms.

Once a teacher of geology at Dhaka University, he got involved in BNP politics during the rule of former president Ziaur Rahman.

He won parliamentary election from Comilla-1 constituency four times. In Khaleda Zia's government in 1991-96, he served as a minister first for home affairs and then for power, mineral and energy resources. He was at the helm of health ministry during the four-party alliance rule in 2001-06.

He was arrested on March 7, 2007 by the army-led joint forces in anti-graft drive by the caretaker government. He came out on bail in December last year.

Currently, he stands accused in several cases. ACC had three cases against him on graft charges and NBR one for evading income tax of Tk 63.23 lakh between fiscal year 1996 and 2006. In fiscal year 2008-09, he paid Tk 2.82 lakh in income tax.

In September last year, ACC pressed charges against him of amassing wealth worth over Tk 9.10 crore through illegal means and concealing information about assets worth over Tk 4.31 crore.

At first, he was found to have been possessing assets worth over Tk 13.86 crore beyond known sources of income. Later, he had over Tk 4.75 crore of the amount legalised under a provision by the caretaker government to allow whitening black money, said an ACC official.

Mosharraf's statement to ACC said his wife and son Maruf had Tk 6.62 lakh in a joint account at the principal branch of Pubali Bank.

The amount was described as "foreign currency earning" between 2007 and 2008.

The investigators in the UK found 19 Faber Gardens (Hendon, London, NW4 4NP) to be Bilquis's correspondence address there.

"This is a residential property owned by a Mr. Salimullah Shaikh, who is an accountant registered with the Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales," a source said quoting the UK report.

The investigators also said they believe Bilquis has a brother named Abdur Rashid, who is in business with one Abdur Bashir Kaiser.

They are involved with the Bangladesh based Kaiser Trading Company Limited, which is part of the Gumi Group of Companies. They both use 19 Faber Gardens, Hendon, London, NW4 4NP as a UK correspondence address.

British investigators found that Rashid also has a Lloyds TSB Bank account in Guernsey, which has a balance of approximately £500,000, said the source.

The document read, "There are reasonable grounds to suspect that Khandaker Hossain and Bilquis Hossain have conspired to launder the proceeds of criminal activity, and that substantial amounts of money are involved."

Officials working in the anti-graft drive said they have learned about many cases like Mosharraf's.

They believe a good number of high profile graft suspects have huge sums in banks abroad.

Mostly former ministers and lawmakers of the BNP-led four-party alliance and their family members, they are suspected of embezzling those from big government projects.

Over Tk 1 cr

FROM PAGE 1

'remember' the amount he had brought back saying he needs to go through documents.

Asked why he had brought the money back, Mosharraf said, "I just thought to bring it back in the country. But since I was in jail, I sought help from the taskforces."

The amount was brought in two phases and deposited to Mosharraf's account, which is still frozen, at the corporate branch of Janata Bank on Tophkhana Road in the capital.

About Tk 82.61 lakh was deposited to the account against \$60,839.74 on May 29, 2007 and about Tk 21.06 lakh against \$15,442.33 on June 6, 2007.

Sources say the money was brought back as part of the caretaker government's attempt to bring back the money siphoned off by the high-profile graft suspects. It could recover Tk 1.219 crore from abroad and deposited in national coffers.

As Mosharraf was behind bars as a high-profile graft suspect, the taskforces brought back the amount to have it deposited in the government exchequer at a later time, sources involved in the anti-corruption drive said.

Mosharraf did not bring back other assets he owns in the UK, the sources add. He said the process has yet to be completed to bring back the assets he has in the UK.

Army gets down

FROM PAGE 16

law enforcement agencies, sources in the EC Secretariat said.

Home Minister Sahara Khatun has said some 5,13,800 law enforcers, including 38,000 army troops, will be deployed across the country to ensure peaceful atmosphere during the upazila polls.

REPORTED INFLUENCE ON UPAZILA POLLS

The EC has found that ruling party MPs are trying to influence the upazila parishad elections in many areas by carrying out electoral campaigns in favour of their candidates. But the commission is unable to take any action to prevent this because the electoral rules do not impose any restriction on MPs against campaigning for their party candidates.

"We cannot prevent law-makers from campaigning for their candidates in the poll as there is no such restriction in the electoral laws on them," Election Commissioner Muhammed Sohul Hussain told reporters yesterday at his office.

He urged lawmakers not to make any pledge for development activities seeking vote for their candidates.

The EC yesterday sent a letter to the speaker informing him about violation of electoral code of conduct by AL lawmaker Abdul Quddus of Natore by taking 80 gold replicas of boat, AL election symbol, as gift and asking people to vote for the candidate of his choice if they want development of the area.

In the letter, the EC said his conduct is not acceptable to it when the whole nation is committed to establish good governance and build a country free from corruption.

The EC sent another letter to the Cabinet Division, informing it about violation of electoral code of conduct by Rajshahi City Corporation Mayor Khairuzzaman Liton for campaigning in favour of an upazila parishad candidate.

As per electoral rules, a mayor, who enjoys the status of a state minister, cannot campaign for any candidate.

BCL erases

FROM PAGE 16

Sylhet city unit of BNP took out a procession in the city yesterday afternoon protesting the changes of the names of the dormitories. The protesters held a brief rally at the Sylhet central Shaheed Minar.

The then finance minister M Saifur Rahman laid the foundations of the 3-storey buildings in 2005.

The BCL men, meanwhile, took control of the Surma and Protiva hostels of Sylhet Polytechnic Institute. BCL city and Madan Mohan college units helped the polytechnic students in capturing those halls.

Principal of the institute admitted the fact and said he had informed the law enforcers of the incident.

The BCL men ousted Jatiyatabadi Dal (JCD) activists from the dormitories of the Sylhet Agriculture University and took control of it.

In the Shahjalal University of Science & Technology (SUST), BCL activists captured two dormitories. Activists of JCD fled the dorms.

However, about a hundred Shibir men were still in the dormitories, campus sources said.

The incidents have happened over the past 3 days.

AL's crime dons

FROM PAGE 1

Shamim Hasnain stayed the 13 years' jail term of Iqbal and granted him bail for two months.

But the HC bench of Justice Muzammel Hossain and Justice Afzal Hossain Ahmed refused to entertain separate bail petitions submitted by Jatiya Party (Manju) Chairman Anwar Hossain Manju, former AL lawmakers Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Mokbul Hossain, Haji Selim and Mohammad Mohiuddin of Munshiganj.

However, the HC bench of Justice Syed AB Mahmudul Huq and Justice Mayeenul Islam Chowdhury later accepted for hearing the bail petitions of Manju, Mokbul and his son Masud Hossain, Selim and Mohiuddin.

The political figures were fugitive and convicted in separate cases filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) on different charges including amassing wealth illegally and hiding wealth information.

On August 26 last year, Manju was sentenced to 13 years' rigorous imprisonment (RI) by a special court for amassing wealth illegally and concealing information in his wealth statement.

Earlier on June 10 last year, he was sentenced to seven years' RI in a bribery case, while on May 18 he was given a seven-year jail term in another bribery case. Besides, on June 26 in 2007, he was jailed for five years for possessing 21 bottles of alcohol at his Dhanmondi house in the capital.

Sources say Manju has been jailed for total 28 years in four separate cases. He has filed four bail petitions in the four cases against him.

Maya, former state minister for shipping, was jailed for 13 years for the same count of corruption on February 14 last year.

Mohiuddin was sentenced to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment and one year's simple imprisonment for the same offences on July 10 last year. He was jailed for eight years by a special court on August 7 last year for evading taxes.

Mokbul and Selim were also handed down different jail terms in separate graft cases.

Thailand

FROM PAGE 16

migrants when they tried to swim ashore the Andaman Islands from a drifting boat in the Indian sea. The rest of the 400 migrants were feared dead.

To clarify the issue, Thanchit said "Thailand has always committed to maintaining its traditional adherence to humanitarian principles and the protection of human rights in employing measures to protect its borders at sea from various illegal activities, including illegal migration, in accordance with its immigration laws."

He said Thai authorities concerned would reassess the overall situation of illegal immigrants, taking into consideration relevant developments, including in the policy, due to the increasing urgency of this issue and the increasing size of the problem.

"We will also coordinate closely with the countries concerned and will also consider raising this issue in such fora as BIMSTEC," he said.

Thailand has always supported bilateral, regional and international cooperation to combat people smuggling and human trafficking, whether at sea or on land, the ambassador said and added that this must necessarily engage countries of origin, transit and destination.

BDR asked

FROM PAGE 16

and the country faced a serious food crisis," he said.

The food minister said the people have started to hope for better days after the AL came to power again. The prices of food commodities have also started falling.

Dr Razzak said local food production has to be increased if the country faces food deficiency. Food has to be imported from neighbouring countries during the time of any food crisis so that people do not die of starvation, he added.

The minister went round the food transshipment yard and check-post area in the port. He laid emphasis on faster clearing of goods from the port and making the import and export more dynamic.

He gave assurance to build up Benapole as a modern port and directed to take stern action against theft of goods from the port.

Lawmaker from Jessore-1 Alhaj Sheikh Afil Uddin, Director of the Food Directorate Pius Costa, member (port) Fayeruz Rahman Chowdhury, Customs Commissioner Abdul Kafi, BDR Sector Commander Col Emdadul Haq, BDR Commanding Officer Lt Col Hafizur Rahman and Port Director Saiful Haque Khan were present.

Sources say the convicted leaders, who were abroad since the 1/11 changeover, have recently returned home following the political government's takeover.

A lawyer says there is no legal bar for the law enforcers to arrest the convicted leaders as they were not granted bail.

Counsel for the AL leaders Advocate Syed Ahmed Raja said hearing of the bail petitions may be held today.

Raja added he would move the petition for bail to Maya before the bench of Justice Syed AB Mahmudul Huq and Justice Mayeenul Islam Chowdhury.

Meantime, rumours were rife yesterday that AL leaders Abul Hasnat Abdullah and Shamim Osman might appear before the court for bail, but they didn't show up.

Zia's birth

FROM PAGE 16

paid a glowing tribute to the founder of the party. "The success that Ziaur Rahman achieved in his short political career is a historical example and he is a leader to follow for his honesty and far-sightedness," he said.

To mark the day, BNP and its associate organisations have drawn up weeklong programmes including discussion meetings, milad mahfils, drawing competitions, blood donation campaigns and photo exhibitions.

Leaders and workers of the party will place wreaths and offer special prayers at the grave of Ziaur Rahman at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar at 10:00am today. The party flag is to be hoisted at the party's central office at Nayapaltan in the morning.

BNP high command urged all the district, city, upazila and ward units of the party to carry out these similar programmes.

Tigers

FROM PAGE 16

two wickets after having reduced the visitors to five wickets for just six runs. Earlier, Bangladesh defeated Sri Lanka by five wickets after they were shocked in the opener by Zimbabwe.

The think-tank have chosen the same twelve that played the tri-series final with Mahbubul Alam and Enamul Haque missing out yet again.

The African visitors have had a decent start to their tour, defeating Bangladesh in the opening match of the tri-series but suffering a big defeat to Sri Lanka.

In the last home series, Bangladesh whitewashed Zimbabwe 5-0 in 2006 before winning 3-1 in Zimbabwe including an exciting one-wicket win in the last game between the two sides. But overall, the visitors have a 19-15 advantage over the Tigers in all one-dayers.

CU unlocked

FROM PAGE 1

Chhatra League is the student wing of Awami League.

Sharif Uddin, additional superintendent of police, said five platoons of police were deployed on the campus to maintain law and order.

Earlier, CU Assistant Proctor Anwar Hossain told The Daily Star that he telephoned Chhatra League leaders about unlocking the gates and the leaders assured him of not interfering.

Talking to The Daily Star Prof Alam said, "I was appointed by the government through a process and I will leave the post if the government wants."

Classes and examinations were not held yesterday but shuttle trains connecting the university with Chittagong city plied as usual carrying a handful of students.

Mohammad Ershad Hossain, general secretary of Chhatra League CU unit, told The Daily Star, "We are observing the situation. Our ultimatum will expire Monday noon and then we would announce our next course of action."

"We want coexistence of members of all student organisations in the university dormitories. But the incumbent VC is patronising the Islamic Chhatra Shibir and it limits the opportunity for coexistence," he added.

On Saturday, activists of Islamic Chhatra Shibir, the student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami, barred two Chhatra League activists from boarding at Hasan Cottage, a rented house in front of Shah Amanat Hall. The Shibir men also assaulted them and put the cottage under lock and key, sources said.

Protesting the incident, the Chhatra League men brought out a procession and locked all the faculties resulting an abrupt halt to the academic and administrative activities.

BCL activists also laid siege to the VC's residence and issued a 48-hour ultimatum for his resignation. Agitating Chhatra League men also vandalised windowpanes of the proctor office and some chairs of the Chittagong University Central Students' Union (CUCSU) Saturday morning.

Baira for bank to help overseas jobseekers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira) yesterday proposed setting up of a bank for expatriates with the money of the Wage Earners' Welfare Fund to provide loans to jobseekers abroad.

It also suggested reducing passport fee for jobseekers abroad and providing them with air tickets at a reduced price.

Baira made the proposals at a meeting between its executive body and Engineer Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, minister of the labour and employment and expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministries.

The minister discussed various issues concerning the welfare of Bangladeshi workers abroad and floated the idea of forming welfare organisations by Bangladeshi migrants abroad.

The minister said the government will set up training institutes in every upazila to create skilled manpower and agreed to the Baira's proposal to continue operation of the National Skill Development Council formed by the caretaker government.

"Such a bank could give soft loans to aspirant migrants and upon their return, they could also take loans for various projects on the basis of their experience and skills," Baira President Ghulam Mustafa told the minister.

A committee could be formed to formulate a work plan for making the best use of Wage Earners' Welfare Fund, he said.

Baira also proposed increasing the recruiting agencies' charge to Tk 1,40,000 from Tk 84,000, saying that widespread competition among recruiting agencies of labour-exporting countries have resulted in an increase in migration costs.

Expressing concern that migrant workers are losing jobs in the United Arab Emirates and Malaysia because of global financial crisis, Ghulam Mustafa said the Bangladesh missions abroad should negotiate with the employers for arranging alternative jobs for them.

Baira requested the government to probe the incident of drowning of illegal Bangladeshi and Rohingya migrants in the Bay of Bengal and take stern actions against the syndicates involved in illegal migration.

Officials of the expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry and Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training and Baira executive committee members, among others, were present.

Khaleida talks

FROM PAGE 1

"We discussed about our stance in the opening session of the parliament, particularly on the ordinance that might be brought before the parliament for discussion," a BNP standing committee member present in the meeting told The Daily Star.

BNP standing committee member Mahbubuddin Ahmed and Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar gave their legal opinions during discussions on different ordinances in the meeting.

Party's standing committee members M Shamsul Islam and Lt General (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman, lawmaker Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain were present at the meeting among others.

Give enough loan

FROM PAGE 16

percent or Tk 4,228 crore in loans has already been distributed, according to the review report Bangladesh Bank placed in the meeting.

The eight financial institutions have disbursed Tk 3,335 crore or 45.49 percent of their target of Tk 7,331 crore.

Private commercial banks disbursed Tk 893 crore or 43.61 percent of their target of Tk 2,048 crore.

Earlier, Bangladesh Bank asked the banks to provide loan facilities to the farmers against three-year-long revolving credit line. It also directed the banks to give loans to the landless and sharecroppers.

Yesterday's meeting was informed that 60,000 farmers have been given revolving credit line facility. However, no information was available on distribution of loan to sharecroppers.

However, the five foreign banks did not disburse any agricultural loans and 12 private commercial banks disbursed agricultural loans between Tk 1 crore and Tk 3 crore each.

Bangladesh Bank expressed dissatisfaction at this.

Huda said in future target would be fixed for the banks that do not disburse agricultural loans and there is no legal bar to making them disburse the loans.

Hundreds feared

FROM PAGE 16

"We fear several hundred are still missing," coast guard commander SP Sharma told AFP. He said India had rescued 446 refugees from four boats since the end of December.

Those figures are in line with those of the Sunday Morning Post, a Hong Kong newspaper, which said it had compiled a toll of 538 missing or dead.

Sharma said the migrants said they had been arrested by Thai officials and set adrift without engines or navigational equipment.

"Some survivors also said their boat was towed out to sea by the Thai navy and given two sacks of boiled rice and two gallons of water before being abandoned in the middle of the sea," he said.

The Bangkok Post newspaper on Sunday carried accounts from survivors.

"We were tied up and put into a boat without an engine... we were then towed into the high seas by a motor boat and set adrift," a man named as Zaw Min told the paper.

Thailand is facing a brutal separatist insurgency in the south of the country that has left more than 3,500 people dead in the last five years, and the government would be sensitive about any mass influx of migrants.

But the Thai navy and other government officials have denied the accusations.

"Authorities followed the regular process when arresting the illegal migrants," navy spokesman Captain Prachachart Sirisawat told AFP.