

Hasina, Khaleda face off

Opposition creating unrest; unhappy with success of govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday accused the opposition parties of attempts to plunge the country into chaos.

Frustrated by their election debacle, she said in parliament, the BNP-led opposition is making 'incendiary' remarks about the BDR bloodbath to 'create unrest'.

Speaking on the thanksgiving motion on the president's speech, Hasina said she wants to know if new schemes are being hatched to destabilise her government.

She urged the opposition to wait till the next election for people to decide who should be in power. "Please cooperate with us. Don't do anything that might tarnish the country's image."

She also said she wants to patch things up with her archrival and work together in the interests of democracy.

Refuting Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia's allegations with regard to the government's handling of BDR crisis, she said,



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Govt failed to handle BDR massacre; CG rulers should be tried

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia yesterday in parliament asked the government not to behave in ways which push the opposition to take 'tough decisions'.

Saying that the Awami League-led government failed to tackle the BDR massacre in Palkhona, Khaleda raised questions on whether Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina should continue to hold the portfolio of the defence ministry.

Taking part in the discussion on a thanks-giving motion on former president Iajuddin Ahmed's speech, Khaleda demanded trial of the members of Fakhruddin Ahmed-led caretaker government for their 'misdeeds' in the last two years.

Strongly criticising Fakhruddin government, Khaleda said 'engaging the forces of BDR in controlling commodity prices was a mockery, which resulted in the recent mayhem in the border security force headquarters'.

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JS CANDIDATES
EC to hire
accountants
to audit poll
expenses

UNB, Dhaka

The Election Commission (EC) will appoint chartered accountants for auditing the return statements of election expenditures submitted by the candidates for the ninth parliamentary elections.

"By appointing chartered accountants we will verify the statements very soon," Election Commissioner M Sohel Hussain told reporters at his office when asked if the EC would follow up on the Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) findings.

According to the TIB report, published last Monday, some 87 percent candidates including MPs spent beyond the limit of poll expenditures during the December 29 general election.

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BHOLA AMMO HAUL

Faisal puts blame on his local aides

SHARIFUL ISLAM from Bhola

British national and founder of Green Crescent Madrasa-cum-orphanage in Bhola Faisal Mostafa pinned the blame of recovered arms, ammunition and explosives on the madrasa's caretaker and his local associates as his 10-day remand started yesterday.

Local investigators started quizzing Faisal and his close associate Mohammad Saifuddin Badal after a judicial magistrate's court placed them on remand. They are being interrogated in connection with the seizure of huge firearms, ammo and explosives from the madrasa in Borhanuddin upazila on March 24.

"Faisal says he seldom visits the madrasa as he stays in the UK most of the year and knows nothing about the firearms," an investigator told The Daily Star.

Faisal claims that Badal, cook of the madrasa Mohiuddin and some other Green Crescent committee members know everything as Mohiuddin stayed there and others often visit the madrasa, the investigator added asking not to be identified.

Asked about Faisal's possible link with militancy, another investigator said he is also denying having such links.

Faisal said he only owns the arrow and bows and the two jackets he used to wear in camouflage during hunting. The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized the jackets, arrows and bows and the illegal firearms from the false ceiling of the madrasa building during the March 24 raid.

"We're now verifying their statements. They will be quizzed intensively when the fact will come out," the investigator said. They can't avoid their responsibilities being the founder and patron of the madrasa, he added.

Police sources say the two will be sent to the Task Force for Interrogation (TFI) cell in the capital for further interrogation.

Cook Mohiuddin and all the committee members went into hiding after Rab busted the madrasa-cum-orphanage and seized the arms cache along with books on Taliban and Moududi.

The arrestees were hauled before the court

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PRESIDENT'S FUND
Iajuddin gave
major chunk
to his district

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Individuals of Munshiganj, the home district of former President Iajuddin Ahmed, got priority over all other citizens in the country in receiving donations from the president's discretionary fund last year.

The former president donated around Tk 75 lakh to 644 individuals and 33 institutions of 17 districts in Dhaka division. Of them, 306 individuals of Munshiganj got grants, according to a list disclosed in parliament yesterday.

Replying to a query of BNP lawmaker Nazrul Islam Manju, Planning Minister Air Vice Marshal (ret'd) AK Khandker, who is also in charge of the president's office in parliamentary business, revealed the list.

The list says Iajuddin donated a total of Tk 96.58 lakh

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MPs' advisory role to create chaos

Upazila chairmen express anger over provisions curbing their powers

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

A good number of upazila parishads might have difficulty functioning properly as they will have more than one lawmaker as advisers as per the upazila bill passed on Monday.

"Due to the latest delimitation of parliamentary constituencies, more than 100 upazilas are made up of areas falling in two constituencies and so they might get two lawmakers as advisers," Tofael Ahmed, a former member of the local government commission, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Activities of the parishads might be hindered if the advisers were at odds over any issue regarding local development, he pointed out.

There are 300 lawmakers (excluding those elected in women's reserved seats) against 482 upazilas across the country. This leaves each MP 1.6 upazilas to take care of as adviser.

The much-talked about bill, says the members of parliament will be advisers to upazila councils in their constituencies, and upazila officials shall take advice from them.

Meanwhile, the upazila chairmen's association met in the capital last night to discuss the bill.

Meeting sources said the chairmen want the prime minister to intervene immediately to resolve the issue.

If the government fails to address their concern through a gazette notification they would go to courts of law to challenge the provisions that give the lawmakers sweeping powers over the parishads.

In a statement issued after the meeting, the association's co-coordinators Harun-or-Rashid Hawlader and Badiuzzaman Badsha urged the government to take immediate measures to remove the provisions that curb the upazila parishads' independence.

Hawlader told The Daily Star, "For the sake of a strong and independent local government system, the bill should have been passed as it was approved by the cabinet."

Criticising the new legislation, Savar upazila

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Habibur made
acting ACC
chairman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President Zillur Rahman has appointed Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Commissioner Habibur Rahman as acting chairman of the commission following resignation of Lt Gen (ret'd) Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury.

A letter from the president's office was faxed to the ACC office yesterday morning with the instruction that the responsibility of ACC will be carried out by the senior commissioner for one month.

In an immediate reaction after taking charge of the office Habibur expressed his determination to work independently otherwise he would resign.

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AUG 21 CASE

Jojo Miah tells
CID of torture,
pressure

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) yesterday recorded the statement of Jojo Miah who was forced to give confessional statement by three former CID officers on the August 21 grenade attack on Awami League rally.

Statements of Jojo Miah's mother and brother were also recorded for over three hours from 12:30pm at Kashimpur-1 Jail, said CID Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Rownakul Huq Chowdhury, the investigation officer of the case filed against the three former CID officers.

In his statement, Jojo Miah

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PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

People of Bashabo, Kadamtola and Sabujbagh queue up at Kamalapur Buddha Bihar for water yesterday as erratic water supply to those areas by Dhaka Wasa continue to trouble them.

BB fixes lending rate limit at 13pc

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Bangladesh Bank (BB) is going to cap lending rate of all types of loans except credit card and consumer loans at 13 percent to offset the fallout of global meltdown.

BB Governor Dr Salehuddin Ahmed informed the decision to all commercial banks at a meeting chaired by him yesterday, and the central bank would issue a circular to this effect within a day or two.

Presently, lending rate in productive sector is 14.75 percent, and in case of other loans it is as high as 18 percent.

The BB also decided to allow six sectors loan rescheduling without down payment for six months. A policy in this regard will be formulated shortly, meeting sources said.

Various directives for providing assistance to export sectors, expatriates affected by the global meltdown and for increasing overall investment were given at the meeting attended by chief executives of all commercial banks and held at the central bank.

After about 18 years, the central bank is imposing a ceiling on lending rate. It has not imposed any such ceiling since liberalising the interest policy in 1990.

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CrPC bill passed empowering admin magistrates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday passed a bill relating to continuation of separation of the judiciary, allowing the government discretion to empower executive magistrates to take cognisance of offences.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shafique Ahmed proposed passage of the bill titled, 'Code of Criminal Procedure (amendment) Act, 2009'.

The bill gives legal coverage to judicial activities after expiry of the twin ordinances promulgated during the caretaker government's tenure to separate the judiciary from the executive.

For delegating cognisance power to an executive magistrate, the government will have to specify why and for how long it wants that official to exercise the authority.

This provision was included in the bill ignoring opposition from the Judicial Service Association, and legal experts.

Immediately after the law minister proposed passage of the bill, a number of BNP lawmakers were supposed to propose amendments to the bill.

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Tk 50,000 bounty on each fugitive BDR man

Around 950 jawans still absconding

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has announced Tk 50,000 bounty for handing over to the authorities each fugitive Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) member suspected of involvement in the February 25-26 mutiny and carnage at the BDR headquarters in the capital.

According to a press release of the home ministry yesterday, Tk 50,000 would be awarded to a person who would hand over to a nearby police station or a law enforcement agency an absconding BDR member suspected to have been involved in the massacre.

Identity of the person would be kept secret, it said.

Meanwhile, the BDR authorities are yet to prepare a complete list of the fugitive BDR personnel.

Asked about the bounty, BDR Director General Maj Gen Md Mainul Islam however said, "I do not yet know about the announcement of bounty regarding absconding BDR personnel."

In reply to a question, he said a complete list of the fugitives is still to be prepared.

But Criminal Investigation Department (CID) sources said around 950 BDR members are still absconding.

Earlier, Commerce Minister Faruk Khan said the government would publish a book containing photographs and other information on the fugitive BDR men, and copies of the book would be given to all district and upazila authorities, police stations, and law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

The BDR mutiny left 74 people, including 57

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PUBLIC SERVANTS
Govt plans to
introduce
transparent
ACR system

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is going to introduce a new system for evaluating performance of public servants from end of this year cancelling the existing Annual Confidential Report (ACR) system.

The new system will be fair and transparent in assessing the performance of government staff for ensuring 'dynamism and accountability' in the administration, said officials at the Secretariat.

Under this system, the service performance will be

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