

Govt failed

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Appearing in the JS after a long break, the opposition leader said, "With a limited number of lawmakers, we are trying to make parliament functional and uphold multiparty democracy, therefore we are continuing to extend our cooperation to the government."

"I don't know how much longer we will be able to keep continuing our efforts, as the treasury bench lawmakers are hurling epithets in foul languages at the opposition lawmakers," Khaleda said during her one-hour and forty minutes speech.

"It's not possible for any decent person to perform his or her duties, if the situation continues to remain the same," the BNP chief said adding, "It seems they [treasury bench] want an opposition free House."

"I urge the government, so we are not forced to take any tough decision," added the leader of the opposition.

The opposition leader said Fakhruddin Ahmed-led caretaker government presided over a 'barbaric rule for two years, besmirched politicians, and labelled them as bad persons'.

The caretaker government which had no public mandate should be tried for giving the country a bad name," Khaleda said.

Without mentioning anyone's name, the opposition leader said 'it is clear who is linked with the BDR mutineers'.

Khaleda Zia blasted Army Chief General Moeen U Ahmed 'for not taking any initiative to save his officers in the BDR headquarters during the massacre'.

The BNP chief said the December 29, 2008 general election pushed the country into a deeper crisis, as the desire of the public turned into disappointments within three months of the election.

The opposition chief said the armed forces were not behind 'the evil deeds and the injustices committed during the immediate past caretaker government', whom the BNP chief blamed for 'destroying the country'.

"The border security force BDR was engaged in businesses and shopping in a bid to control prices of essentials," Khaleda said.

"Recently we observed with pain the long-term serious bad effect that mockery had on the force," Khaleda said.

The BNP chief harshly criticised former president Iajuddin Ahmed, accusing him

Faisal

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yesterday with an appeal for 10 days' remand for each.

Faisal who was not initially accused in either of the two cases was finally made an accused in the case filed under the Arms and Explosives Act. Borhanuddin police say he was made an accused as his name surfaced in the recently made confessional statement of another accused Moulana Mohammad Russell.

Earlier in the morning, both Faisal and Badal were brought to Borhanuddin Police Station from the capital after Rab on Monday confirmed that they arrested the two in Pubail in Gazipur the same day.

The police took both the accused in handcuffs to the court around 2:30pm amid tight security. Several hundred people in Bhola turned up to have a glimpse of Faisal and Badal.

On behalf of the investigation officer (IO) Sub-inspector Rafiqul Islam of Borhanuddin police, the court inspector placed the forwarding report before the court.

In the forwarding report SI Rafiqul said they have primarily found involvement of Faisal and Badal in the incident and pointed out the necessity of their interrogation for information about the case and the whereabouts of other accused.

Eight lawyers stood in the court for Faisal and Badal and appealed to the court for their bail.

After hearing both sides, the court granted 10 days remand for each of them.

Iajuddin

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last year to individuals and institutions of six divisions.

The former president donated Tk 74.95 lakh to 644 individuals and 33 institutions of Dhaka division, Tk 9.24 lakh to 87 individuals and 37 institutions of Chittagong division, Tk 5.11 lakh to 90 individuals and five institutions of Rajshahi division, Tk 1.5 lakh to 21 individuals of Khulna division, Tk 4.32 lakh to 64 individuals and 17 institutions of Barisal division and Tk 1.46 lakh to 27 individuals and two institutions of Sylhet division.

Iajuddin donated money to individuals mainly for their medical treatments and educational expenditure of their children.

AK Khandker said the president donated the money from his discretionary fund in line with the policy circulated by the Cabinet Division on March 20, 1978.

The immediate past caretaker government increased the amount of the president's discretionary fund to Tk 1 crore from Tk 50 lakh.

of violating the country's constitution by postponing the January 22, 2007 election, and by appointing Fakhruddin Ahmed as the chief of the immediate past caretaker government.

She also accused Iajuddin, who was appointed as the president by the last BNP-led government, of not keeping his presidential oath.

"He should have resigned, if he had failed to perform his duty," Khaleda said.

Khaleda urged the House not to pass any thanks giving motion on the former president's speech.

CrPC bill

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They were also supposed to propose circulating the bill to elicit public opinion it, and sending it to a select committee for giving it back by April 18.

But they could not place the proposals as the BNP legislators led by Khaleda Zia staged a walkout before the law minister proposed passage of the bill. They walked out protesting inclusion of Bangladesh Jatiya Party lawmaker Andalib Rahman Partha in the parliamentary standing committee on home ministry.

Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abidin Faroque said the treasury bench included Andalib, rejecting their proposal in this regard.

After the BNP lawmakers' walkout, the bill was passed by voice vote.

It provides that if empowered, an executive magistrate can take cognisance of offences on receipt of a complaint, a report in writing from a police official and information from any person other than a police official, or upon his own knowledge or suspicion that such offences have been committed.

It means they will have the same authority as judicial magistrates to take cognisance of offences in any situation.

The executive magistrates however cannot hold trial of the offenders, and have to send them to court for trial.

The bill, which was placed in parliament on March 2, initially did not have this provision. But the parliamentary standing committee on law ministry in its scrutiny report on March 19 recommended inclusion of such a provision.

In consultation with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the committee made the recommendation following demands from the administrative cadre, who lost judicial authority after separation of the judiciary on November 1, 2007.

The Judicial Service Association and legal experts said the committee's recommendation went against the spirit of separation of the judiciary.

Earlier, the bill was scheduled for passage on March 29. But the law minister refrained from proposing its passage in view of objection from the police administration to a certain provision.

The provision allows the government to appoint executive magistrates in metropolitan cities in efforts to prevent law enforcers' extra judicial activities. But the police administration opposed it arguing that they might face difficulties in discharging their duties if executive magistrates are appointed in metropolitan areas.

The House also passed another bill titled Padma Multipurpose Bridge (land requisition) Act 2009 yesterday.

BCL men

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from the position of their organisational chief.

Amidst tremendous pressure from the colleagues, Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) President Mahmud Hasan Ripon and General Secretary Mahfuzul Haider Chowdhury Roton were supposed to meet Hasina on Monday to discuss the student front and appeal to her to return as the organizational chief.

Following frequent clashes on campuses across the country by the BCL men, Hasina stepped down from the BCL chief position last Saturday. The next day, top BCL leaders went to prime minister's official residence to meet her. One of the APS to the prime minister however, told the BCL leaders that Hasina would meet them on Monday.

Meanwhile, meeting between Sheikh Hasina and (BCL) leaders over existing crisis in the student body has become uncertain, as neither Hasina nor BCL president nor its general secretary have been showing much interest.

BCL sources said the announcement of holding meeting between Hasina and BCL president and its general secretary was aimed to calm down the leaders' grudge against the two top BCL leaders.

Sources close to Hasina said she is now too busy and can hardly make time to meet the BCL leaders.

Asked when they are going to meet Hasina, Roton denied to talk on the matter saying, "We will inform you about it later."

Journalist

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reporter with one of India's largest newspapers, the Hindi daily Dainik Jagran.

Before throwing the shoe, Singh asked Chidambaram several questions about the Central Bureau of Investigation's findings last week that cleared a senior Congress party leader, Jagdish Tytler, from any involvement in the bloody riots that left 3,000 dead.

Chidambaram said CBI was an independent body and the government played no role in the decision, and called for the public to be patient.

Singh, dressed in an olive-green shirt and a white turban, then threw his blue and white sneaker at Chidambaram, narrowly missing his face.

Moments later, Chidambaram repeatedly asked the reporters in the room to "settle down," and said, "the emotional outburst of one man should not hijack a press conference." Soon after, Singh told TV news reporters that he regretted throwing the shoe but he felt Chidambaram was dodging the question.

"I just wanted to ask him how justice will be done, but he was not interested in answering the questions," he told CNN-IBN during a telephone interview from police custody. "I don't think it was the right way, what I have done, but the issue is right."

Singh did not say whether he was inspired by Iraqi journalist Muntadhar al-Zaidi, who last month was sentenced to three years in prison for throwing his shoes at former President George W. Bush in Baghdad.

The 1984 riots, which remain a very controversial issue in India, left more than 3,000 dead, most of whom were Sikhs. The carnage erupted across India after former prime minister Indira Gandhi's Sikh bodyguards shot her to death.

Many blame Congress party officials for turning a blind eye or even supporting the rioters in the violence that ensued after their leader was slain.

On Tuesday, hundreds of Sikhs held protests over the CBI's findings in front of the home of Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, the daughter-in-law of Indira Gandhi.

Jagdish Tytler, the centre of the controversy, was a lawmaker at the time and remains a divisive figure in Indian politics. He is currently campaigning for re-election to Parliament in elections that begin later this month.

36 identified

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in a press release on March 31, said Libyan coastguards rescued 66 Bangladeshis among 350 migrants from different countries from the boat floating off the Libyan coast.

Of the remaining rescued people, 44 hail from Somalia, 18 from Eritrea, 33 from Ghana, 55 from Egypt, 25 from Tunisia, seven from Algeria, 15 from Morocco, 30 from Nigeria and 19 from Syria, five from India and two from Pakistan, it said.

An unconfirmed source said 86 Bangladeshis were rescued from Libyan coast during the rescue operation. "They were kept in three centres in Tripoli and provided with medical treatment," the source said.

The expatriates' welfare ministry said Bangladesh mission in Tripoli has identified only 36 Bangladeshis but it is yet to confirm whether they went there legally or illegally.

The official said the government would surely take steps to repatriate the Bangladeshi nationals and added that in such cases, Libyan government may finance the repatriation or IOM can help the process.

Sources concerned said the government is yet to officially communicate with IOM in Dhaka or Libyan authorities to arrange repatriation of the rescued people.

Aug 21 attack

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summoned several other witnesses to appear before it on the scheduled date.

In his statement, Bashir told the court that he was a driver of Awami League (AL) Chief Sheikh Hasina's car on August 21, 2004.

He also told that several grenades hurled on an AL rally at Bangabandhu Avenue when Hasina was about to complete her speech on that day.

The policemen, who were on duty for Hasina's security, cordoned her and tried to evacuate her from the scene, he added.

At one stage, several miscreants threw bricks on the car convey that left Bashir unconscious.

Two other witnesses Kashem and Siraj, employees of Prince Tailoring Shops, told the court that they were present at the rally where miscreants exploded grenades.

Earlier, 23 other prosecution witnesses have their statements before the court and they were cross-examined by defence lawyers.

Meanwhile, the prime accused of this case, former deputy minister Abdul Salam Pintu, Harkatul Jihad Al Islami (Huji) chief Mufti Abdul Hannan and 12 others, now in jail custody, were produced before the court yesterday.

Eight others, including Pintu's brother Maulana Tajuddin have been absconding since the cases were filed.

Twenty-three people including Ivy Rahman, wife of President Zillur Rahman, were killed and several others were injured in the attacks.

On June 11 last year, Criminal Investigation Department (CID) pressed charges against Pintu, Hannan and 20 others for carrying out the grenade attacks on the rally.

Fight for office

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The newly-appointed DG of Department of Shipping Commodore Bazlur Rahman joined on April 2 but former DG Shafiqullah kept going to the office ahead of him and occupying it.

A shipping ministry high official had to intervene yesterday and verbally ask Shafiqullah to leave the office. Shafiqullah did so but locked the door of the DG's office and left with the keys. Unable to get into his new office Bazlur had informed the ministry of the matter, sources in the ministry said.

"Later we managed to open the door and the new DG finally got his office," said a shipping official requesting anonymity.

When asked about the incident, Bazlur refused to make any comment.

It is alleged that Shafiqullah provided No Objection Certificate (NOC) for a Greenpeace blacklisted ship to be dismantled here even though only the department of environment has the jurisdiction to provide such NOCs.

The Prime Minister's Office had issued an order in 2006 not to permit any ships blacklisted by Greenpeace inside Bangladesh. During his four-year term as the DG, Shafiqullah was calling the shots at the shipping department and the office started giving NOCs for dismantling ships.

The government on contract appointed Bazlur Rahman, a retired officer of Bangladesh Navy, as the DG of the department of shipping on March 31 and he joined on April 2. The ministry did not give any new post to Shafiqullah.

Shafiqullah then went to High Court and filed a writ petition to get a status quo and the High Court gave an order to this effect. Getting the order, Shafiqullah went to "his office" Monday around 8:30am and told officials there that he was still the DG. He did the same yesterday.

The shipping ministry high official yesterday had to explain to Shafiqullah that the High Court status quo order means that everything will be as it is and since the order was issued after Bazlur became DG, the court order actually went against Shafiqullah.

BLACKLISTED SHIPS
During his four-year term, Shafiqullah influenced the department to provide NOC to MT Enterprise, a ship blacklisted by Greenpeace.

Govt plans

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evaluated openly instead of the existing secret system of evaluation. Establishment Secretary Iqbal Mahmud told reporters at the Secretariat yesterday.

He said a pilot project has already been launched at the establishment ministry to introduce the new system from end of this year.

As per the new system titled Personal Appraisal System (PAS), the government will fix annual target for each officer and employee of their duties and evaluate performance at the beginning of a year. This modern system has been introduced in different countries across the world.

"The evaluation paper will be prepared in consultation with the employee concerned, leaving no room (space) for confidentiality," the secretary added.

Proposals on the matter were made several times in the past for introducing performance-based postings and also personal appraisal system in place of ACR to evaluate public officials' performance but no progress had been made so far.

JS candidates

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Sohul said the EC would thoroughly scrutinize the returns on poll expenditures to find out any problems and warned that "legal action" would be taken against the candidates who did not submit the statements to the commission.

"We will check the TIN numbers and other sorts of information provided to us," Replying to a question, he said if anybody is found guilty of submitting false statement, he or she would be disqualified for staying in his (MP) post as per strict provision of the Representation of People Order.

The election commissioner however declined to comment on the report of TIB.

Asked whether the EC would need approval for appointing the chartered accountants for scrutinizing the statements, Sohul said the election commission is an independent body and it does not need to take approval from the government for doing any

listed by Greenpeace.

Following a meeting with Bangladesh Ship-Breakers Association (BSBA), he formed a committee comprising officials of the department of shipping to determine whether MT Enterprise had toxic substances.

According to government rules, the shipping department does not have any authority to provide such certificates to ship breakers or to form any committee to determine presence of toxic substances in a ship. All industries including the ship-breaking industry are supposed to take NOCs from the department of environment.

Documents recovered at the Ministry of Shipping say that Shafiqullah had meetings with BSBA in August, 2008, about importing the Greenpeace blacklisted ship.

The DG later formed the inspection committee to determine whether hazardous substances were present in the ship. This was done to facilitate the importers of MT Enterprise, shipping ministry sources claimed.

The committee inspected MT Enterprise for four hours and observed "the amounts of toxic substances are not excessive than generally found".

Interestingly, records also say that before forming the committee the shipping department provided NOC to MT Enterprise mentioning that it could not check out the Greenpeace website due to lack of internet connection. They provided NOC based on the information provided by the importer, Madina Enterprise.

However, the department of shipping later cancelled the NOC as they came to know that Madina Enterprise provided incorrect information about the ship, the documents say.

The Supreme Court recently directed the government to take clearance certificate from the department of environment before importing any ship for scrapping. The court also directed not to import any poisonous Greenpeace-blacklisted ships and to clean up all ships before they enter Bangladesh territory.

Jojo Miah tells

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narrated how he was tortured and forced to give confessional statement in the grenade attack case.

Jojo Miah is now at the jail in connection with another case while his mother Zobeda Begum and brother Babul Hossain were asked to go to the jail gate to give their statements," said ASP Rownakul.

He said, "In separately recorded statements, they narrated what they know about the activities of those three former CID officials."

Meanwhile, the CID asked Abul Hasem Rana and Shafiqul Islam, who were also forced to give confessional statements in the grenade attack case by the former CID officials, to appear at its Malibagh headquarters on April 12 for giving their statements.

According to CID sources, retired ASP Abdur Rashid, the first IO of the August 21 grenade attack case, arrested 20 people and forced three of them to make false statements.

After his retirement, ASP Munshi Atiqur Rahman was appointed as the second IO while retired special superintendent (SS) Ruhul Amin was their supervisor.

ASP Fazlul Kabir of CID, who was appointed IO of the grenade attack case by the last caretaker government, filed a case on March 29 with Paltan police against the three retired CID officials on charges of misdirection and forcing people to make false statements to save the real culprits.

When asked about Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's decision to relinquish her position as organisational chief of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the election commissioner said in the RPO there is no bar for her to hold any constitutional post of the BCL.

"She (Hasina) is not compelled to quit the post. Anybody can hold any post of any organization," Sohul said, adding that the student organizations cannot be affiliated with the political party.

About the Upazila Parishad Act passed by parliament on Monday, he said the commission would always honor the laws enacted by the sovereign parliament. "The law which is passed by the parliament is correct."

Sohul also informed that the pilot project on updating the voter list completed on Monday in Manikganj and the countrywide updating tasks would begin later on.

Strict security for Pahela Baishakh celebration

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is going to take stringent security measures for Pahela Baishakh, the first day of Bangla New Year on April 14, deploying over 8,000 law-enforcing personnel in and around the Ramna Park, the main venue of the traditional celebration.

Sources said that 5,256 uniformed police and 3,000 Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) personnel will be on guard while 32 CCTV cameras, archways, metal detectors, observation towers and a monitoring centre will be set up in and around the park.

Emerging from a high-level meeting yesterday to adopt security measures for upcoming Pahela Baishakh, State Minister for Home Affairs Sohel Taj told the reporters, "We do not have specific information about any terrorist threat. But we have all-out preparation to face any situation causes threat to human being."

Sources said that FBI trained Special Weapon and Tactics (SWAT), 19 check posts, 37 pickets, 8 mobile patrols and 60 motorcycle patrols will be on duty on the occasion.

In all the entry points of the venue, 9 DB teams in plain-clothes will be on watch to check pickpockets at celebration venue, sources added.

Home Minister Sahara Khatun, Home Secretary Abdus Sobhan Sikdar, IGP Nur Mohammad, DG of Rab Hasan Mahmud Khandaker, DMP Commissioner Shahidul Haque and senior officials were present in the meeting held yesterday at the Home Ministry.

Opposition

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"Perhaps, she is unhappy that the situation did not lead to a civil war and overthrow of the grand alliance government."

The prime minister asked where 'she [Khaleda] went in a car with tinted windows shortly after the mutiny broke out at Pilkhana'.

She said she wonders if the vicious killings of the army officers were a reprisal for the armed forces' role in ensuring a free and fair conduct of the December 29 election.

"They (armed forces) worked neutrally and tirelessly to create an atmosphere conducive to holding a credible and peaceful election. It was them who prepared a new voter roll weeding out over one crore ghost voters."

About government measures to end the Pilkhana mutiny, she said, "I took each and every step in consultation with chiefs of the three forces, and my colleagues in the cabinet and party."

Mentioning the BDR carnage, Hasina observed that only those who patronise war criminals and the killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman can commit such atrocities.

She warned the opposition leader against making statements that might influence the investigation.

Citing the caretaker government's ban on her return from abroad, the premier said former adviser Major Gen (ret'd) MA Matin called her and asked not to fly back home.

"When I enquired why, he said they were doing a great job, they are trying to send Khaleda into exile. I protested the move and eventually got back home defying the government restrictions."

She said the BNP chief would have been forced to go abroad, had she [Hasina] not returned to the country braving all odds.

At that point, Speaker Abdul Hamid said it seems to him that the two leaders in fact helped each other indirectly.

In over one-hour-long speech on the concluding day of the current parliament session, Hasina described the previous AL-led government's success in different sectors.

She said she considers presidency an institution and so she is in favour of thanking the president (Iajuddin Ahmed) for his address to the ninth parliament.

Habibur

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"If I cannot work independently or there is any obstacle or pressure in carrying out my duty, I will have to follow the path of the former chairman," Habibur told The Daily Star.

"I have taken the charge of the office for the time being as many works await approval of the commission chief," he added.

He also said that the ACC's work have been kept up-to-date since Mashhud's resignation.

According to the ACC act it would take at least one month to appoint new ACC chairman. Mashhud stepped down on April 3, after the Awami League-led grand alliance assumed power, concluding the most challenging task he took--fighting corruption during the last caretaker government's tenure.

The ACC will begin holding its regular meetings from today as per the ACC act following Habibur's stake-over.

Attack Thai PM's car

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ment and call elections, but he has said his four-month-old government must stay to resolve problems that have plagued Thailand since Thaksin was toppled in a 2006 coup.

The mounting unrest has prompted widespread speculation that the military could again step in to stabilise the country as it heads into recession, but the armed forces chief denied there would be another putsch.

"The Thai military is acting under the law in supporting the work of the government... It's impossible that military will mount a coup similar to 2006," supreme commander General Songkrit Jaggabatar said.

In the latest unrest, about 400 of Thaksin's so-called 'Red Shirts' surrounded Abhisit's hotel in Pattaya on Tuesday and prevented him and his ministers from leaving for several hours, witnesses said.

Oxford-educated Abhisit had moved the meeting to the resort on the Gulf of Thailand to avoid the blockade of Government House in the capital.

But after he finally left the hotel about 50 of the demonstrators, many of them female, chased his black BMW and

Tk 50,000 bounty

FROM PAGE 1
army officers depicted to the border force, massacred.

The CID is investigating the carnage case while a government-formed committee is probing the incident. Besides, the army is conducting an enquiry.

Meanwhile, two more BDR members yesterday confessed their involvement in the mutiny, and were sent to jail while two civilians arrested earlier were placed on a four-day remand.

The case was shifted to New Market Police Station from Lalbagh police yesterday as the place of occurrence (PO) is in New Market area.

A total of 25 BDR jawans so far confessed their involvement in the mutiny.

CID sources said the two civilians-- shoe trader Delwar Hossain and cosmetic trader Mohammad Sumon-- were arrested under Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code for allegedly making provocative statements on February 25-26.

So far, 165 BDR personnel and civilians have been placed on remand and 920 BDR jawans shown arrested in the case.

BB fixes