

It's a blueprint

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committee meeting last night.

"This [scrapping caretaker system] is nothing but a betrayal with the nation. The decision will heighten constitutional crisis, political tension and uncertainty and will put the country into a political conflict," the statement added.

Held at party Chairperson Khaleda Zia's Gulshan office in the capital, the meeting also decided to announce a series of agitation programmes including hartal. Details will be finalised in consultation with like-minded parties, especially with its allies, party sources said.

BNP and its key ally Jamaat-e-Islami are scheduled to hold separate press conferences at their offices in the city at 3:00pm today to declare protest programmes.

Reading out the statement at a press briefing after the meeting, standing committee member Nazrul Islam Khan said the government wants to change the constitution for grabbing the power again through vote rigging, knowing it won't win an election held in a democratic way.

Chaired by Khaleda Zia, the meeting was also attended by committee member Goyeshwar Chandra Roy, acting Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi.

After the standing committee meeting, Khaleda also sat with the leaders of Jamaat, Islami Oikyo Jote and Bangladesh Jatiya Party. Referring to the Supreme Court verdict that declared illegal the 13th amendment of the constitution, which introduced the caretaker government in 1996, Nazrul Islam said implementing the judgment is not obligatory for parliament.

"The apex court has been used to accomplish the political agenda of the government," he said.

Urea price

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held at the Gano Bhaban, said an official of the agriculture ministry.

Six months ago, urea was selling at Tk 20,000 to Tk 22,000 per tonne in the international market, but the price has now reached around Tk 35,000 per tonne, he said.

The government took the decision as to maintain the price at Tk 12 per kg urea requires a huge subsidy, he added.

2 Rab men

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Advocate Mohammad Khabir Uddin filed the case with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court against the accused on charges of kidnapping his son Towfiq Ahmed alias Hassan, a student of Cambrian College, on May 13.

After the hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate MA Salam recorded statement of complainant and ordered a judicial inquiry into the matter.

In his complaint, Khabir Uddin alleged that his son was arrested on February 21 from in front of his Ramna residence for his alleged links with militants and later he was granted bail from the High Court on May 4.

Following the HC bail order, Towfiq was released from the Dhaka Central Jail on May 13 and the complainant was present there to receive his son. But Towfiq was picked up by a group of plain-clothes law enforcers from in front of jail gate soon after his release. Since then complainant's son has been missing.

Later the complainant came to know from different sources including policemen posted at the jail gate that his son was picked up by members of Rab aided by jail authorities, Khabir added.

The complainant appealed to the court for taking into cognisance the complaint against the accused responsible for kidnapping and hiding his son and give exemplary punishment to the kidnappers.

Khabir also prayed for rescuing his son.

Putin claims Strauss-Kahn is the victim of conspiracy

THE DAILY MAIL ONLINE

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has claimed that Dominique Strauss-Kahn may be the victim of a shadowy conspiracy to force him out of his job as head of the International Monetary Fund.

Putin is the first world leader to throw any serious doubts over the sex charges against the 62-year-old Frenchman.

But his remarks will certainly surprise the disgraced former IMF boss, who reportedly said before his arrest that he believed that Mr Putin was actively plotting his downfall.

The prime minister jumped to Strauss-Kahn's defence in comments posted on the official Kremlin website.

He suggested that charges the French presidential candidate sexually assaulted and tried to rape a 32-year-old chambermaid may have been trumped up by the US authorities.

Vladimir Putin said: 'It's hard for me to evaluate the hidden political motives but I cannot believe that it looks the way it was initially introduced. It doesn't sit right in my head.'

American prosecutors put the claims down to mischief making by the Russian premier. Days before his May 14 arrest for the alleged attack at a Times Square, New York, hotel, Strauss-Kahn reportedly told friends that Mr Putin was seeking to oust him from the IMF.

He said the Russians, notably Putin, allied themselves with France to try to have him fired from the IMF, to stop him running for president,' claimed French socialist politician Claude Bartolone, according to the EU Times.

Supporters of the beleaguered moneyman are adamant that he is being framed as part of a sinister international conspiracy to sabotage his bid for the French presidency.

Strauss-Kahn, who was

fired on bail after six days in custody, is facing charges of rape, sexual abuse and false imprisonment.

He was arrested as he tried to catch a plane back to Paris hours after the alleged attack and is under house arrest at a luxury (pounds) 30,000-a-month Manhattan townhouse awaiting his trial.

Putin's unexpected support for the embattled former IMF head is likely to be seized upon by his critics who have accused him of being a male chauvinist.

He sparked uproar in 2006 when he was overheard joking about rape allegations against then Israeli President Moshe Katsav. Mr Putin was quoted as saying: "What a mighty man he turns out to be! He raped 10 women - I would never have expected this from him."

'He surprised us all - we all envy him!' His spokesman said the controversial joke had been mistranslated.

Katsav was later convicted of rape and is now serving a seven-year prison sentence.

Last week, former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown called the scandal a 'personal tragedy' for Mr Strauss-Kahn but didn't suggest there was anything suspicious about the arrest.

Magic exams

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about the results which were published on Sunday.

His family members confirmed that Reduwanur left for the UAE in May 2010 and he did not take the examination.

Contacted, Professor Golam Kibria Bhuiyan, chairman of the examination committee and also the dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities said Reduwanur might have come from abroad to appear in the examination or somebody took it by proxy.

"We will look into the matter," he said.

Concern over

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On May 20, Maj Gen (ret'd) Tarique Ahmed Siddique defended the Rapid Action Battalion by terming both Limon and his father criminals.

Three days later, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni said it is not right expecting to get all the characteristics of the battalion altered overnight.

"Comments by the defence adviser and the foreign minister prove that criminal tendency prevails inside Rab," said the statement signed by former caretaker government advisers M Hafizuddin Khan, Akbar Ali Khan and Rasheda K Chowdhury, TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman and rights activist Khushi Kabir.

The March 23 shootout is a law and order issue. It has nothing to do with the defence, said the statement.

Commenting on the issue outside his jurisdiction, the defence adviser has encouraged Rab to carry out its questionable activities threatening democratic values.

On May 22, Home Minister Sahara Khatun backed the defence adviser by saying anybody can make comment on a case under trial and his comment is the government version.

HT Imam, the prime minister's public administration adviser, has echoed her words. "We own the statement the adviser had given earlier," Imam said.

The five dignitaries also said anything relating Limon is expected to be made public only through the home ministry.

They blasted the government representatives for discussing in public the matter still under trial and investigation.

Statements of the advisers

ers and ministers indicate that under state patronisation the Rab stays above accountability, said the statement.

All the comments including the one by Rab director general and the official statement of the battalion contradict with one another and appear to be ill-efforts to hide the truth.

The Rab in a press briefing on May 23 labelled Limon, his parents and siblings as criminals.

And, Rab DG Mukhlesur Rahman said Limon is not a "notorious criminal", a shift from his April 11 statement that the 16-year-old is "not a criminal".

The conflicting comments expose his weakness in discharging duties as the battalion chief and lack of transparency in the force, it added.

Only the court can decide whether anyone is criminal or not. Rab cannot just shoot someone by calling him or her a criminal, the statement read.

It also criticised the Rab probe team for questioning Limon at a hospital hiding identity.

The five prominent citizens recommended engaging National Human Rights Commission in the investigation to ensure impartiality.

It is inevitable that Rab requires radical reform against the backdrop of allegations of human rights violation despite the fact that the force has remarkable achievements, it said.

The statement also presented statistics from Ain o Salish Kendra, a human rights body, that 1,149 people were killed from 2004 to 2011 in the name of crossfire.

JP sees

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BNP does not participate in the polls without a caretaker government. The country cannot remain captive to the two big parties," he said at a party programme at the Institute of Diploma Engineers Bangladesh in the capital yesterday.

"Time is ripe for the rise of a third political force and Jatiya Party is that force. We don't want to assist anybody to go to power. We ourselves want to go to power," he said.

Ershad, a former military dictator who was ousted through a popular uprising led by AL and BNP in the 90s, hailed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for taking stance against the interim government system.

BNP maintains it will not go to polls if it is not held under such a government, which was introduced through the 13th amendment of the constitution in 1996.

"We're ready for election. Inshallah (God willing) we'll come to power again," said Ershad.

Last month, the Supreme Court declared his nine-year-regime since 1981 illegal.

He also criticised the government for failing to control prices of essentials and the slide in law and order, and not taking steps against the share market manipulators.

Sayedee

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The prosecution opposed the bail petition saying he has been given proper treatment at the hospital.

A three-member tribunal, headed by Justice Md Nizamul Huq, is holding trial of the war crimes cases.

Md Helaluddin, a member of the tribunal's investigation agency, submitted the probe report and other related documents including compact disks and books on the allegations against Sayedee to Chief Prosecutor Ghulam Arieff Tipoo at his office in Old High Court building.

Prosecutor Syed Haider Ali informed the tribunal they have to scrutinise the 15-part final report and other documents for pressing a formal charge against Sayedee.

Sayedee was produced before the tribunal yesterday from Ibrahim Cardiac Hospital. Later he was sent back to the hospital around 10:45am as his health deteriorated.

The tribunal continued the hearing in his absence. Barrister Tanvir Ahmed Al Amin appeared for Sayedee.

The tribunal is likely to hear a remand petition today. Prosecutors filed the petition on Monday to allow the investigators quizzing Jamaat leader Md Kamaruzzaman for three days at the Safe Home in Dhanmondi.

Four detained Jamaat-Islami leaders, Motiur Rahman Nizami, Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed, Muhammad Kamaruzzaman and Abdul Quader Molla, may be produced before the tribunal today in connection with charges of crimes against humanity, as per an earlier order of the tribunal in April.

HC rejects

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Chandra Tagore summarily rejected a writ petition filed by Nayek Md Ibrahim.

On February 24 this year, he was sentenced to six years' imprisonment and fined Tk 100 by a special BGB court in Chittagong.

On May 22, Ibrahim filed the writ petition stating that he was deprived of a proper trial as he was not allowed to engage a lawyer to defend him.

Ibrahim's allegation was false as he was provided with the opportunity to engage legal help during the trial, Attorney General Mahubey Alam told The Daily Star.

However, there is no scope for any convicted BGB man like Ibrahim to move any writ petition before the HC against their convictions following yesterday's HC order, he added.

Meanwhile, Ibrahim's counsel Barrister Shaikh Md Zakir Hossain said he will decide on moving any appeal with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court after further discussions with his client.

AL forgets Kibria

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grenade attack in 2005 while he was holding a meeting with party workers at Baidyerbazar in Habiganj, Sylhet.

Asma said, "Awami League did not pay due respect on his [Kibria's] death anniversaries since it assumed power in 2009. Sometimes I say to myself: 'Oh Kibria, is this the party for which you sacrificed your life!'"

Talking to The Daily Star at her Gulshan residence, where she is now leading a solitary life, Asma shared her bitter experience with issues including the charge sheet of Kibria killing case and the negligence of the government and the party in this regard.

"I also sought to talk to Prime Minister and AL chief Sheikh Hasina for at least five minutes about the charge sheet of the case, but she said she did not have time for that," said Asma in helpless tears.

She said without identifying the real culprits the investigation officer (IO) of

the case tried to submit supplementary charge sheet on May 25 but he refrained from doing so in the face of strong criticism from her.

According to Asma, the IO talked with Kibria family only once since the filing of the case more than five years ago. "We asked the IO over and over to quiz the then deputy commissioner of Habiganj but he paid no heed to that."

"Helpless, we called upon the government to replace the IO, but only to deaf ears. Besides, we also demanded the government take the intelligence's assistance to track down the masterminds. This demand also got lost in the air," she alleged.

The foreign ministry also did not care to remember Kibria while honouring defected Pakistani government officials this April, said Asma.

During the Liberation War in 1971, Kibria served the Pakistani embassy in Washington DC, she said, adding, "He [Kibria] declared allegiance to

Mujibnagar Government of the independent and sovereign Bangladesh and worked with great zeal and dedication to drum up support for Bangladesh in the US."

"His [Kibria's] name was not on the list of the defected officials and I cannot believe that this is happening when AL is in power," she said.

Kibria, also a freedom fighter, chose the present foreign ministry building, but it was very unfortunate that the ministry forgot him, Asma told The Daily Star.

The Dhaka City Corporation also turned down Asma's request to name a road after Kibria.

"The mayor said he [Kibria] was not such a dignitary to name a city road after," Asma said.

"We saw a beam of hope when AL assumed power. But now I can clearly say that we the family of Kibria are deeply shocked and disappointed at the way the AL government is treating us and my departed husband," she said.

It's 'no' of SC, not mine

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unconstitutional and void, but observed that the system may be practiced for holding two more parliamentary elections for the sake of "safety of the state and its people".

The day before yesterday when the parliamentary special committee on constitutional amendment, at a meeting with the prime minister, proposed two different models of caretaker government for two more general elections, the premier did not give consent to continuation of the interim government system.

During a crowded media briefing in her official residence Gono Bhaban yesterday the premier said those who believe in rule of law must comply with the verdict of the apex court.

Hasina, also Awami League president, talked about electronic voting system, main opposition BNP's demand for a mid-term election, price hike of essentials, and her recent visit to Switzerland, Turkey and France as well.

About the Supreme Court's observation that the next two general elections might be held under caretaker governments, the premier said it is merely an observation, nothing mandatory. "We will have to follow the mandatory part."

The main opposition party may place their opinions before the parliament, if they have any, she said adding that it is the jurisdiction of the parliament to consider their proposals.

Referring to the results of Chittagong City Corporation election and by-elections in Habiganj and Brahmanbaria, Sheikh Hasina claimed that all elections held during the AL-

led government were free, fair and credible.

"Awami League did not influence any of the elections. We have proved that free, fair and neutral elections are possible under a political party led government, if it remains sincere and shows respect to democracy."

"The next general election will be held in accordance with practices in developed countries which are parliamentary democracies, especially the Westminster election system," the premier said, adding that the Election Commission (EC) will hold the poll in a free, fair and independent manner.

She said the EC will be made independent and strengthened enough to hold the election without any influence. "A free and fair election can only be held if there is an independent Election Commission in place."

To strengthen the EC, appointments will be made in line with recommendations by an all-party search committee, she said adding that there will be no interference or influence by the ruling party in any election.

Electronic voting system will be introduced so that no one can rig the polls, Hasina said.

On BNP's rejection of the idea of e-voting, she questioned, "Why is she [BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia] opposing it if she believes in democracy?"

Asked whether there is any possibility of political conflicts in case BNP boycotts the next general election, Hasina said, "There were political conflicts during caretaker governments. Those were more intense than the situations during

political party led governments."

"I would say there will definitely be conflicts and chaos if a political party works only to follow its greed for power," the PM said adding that all parties should accept the people's verdict and honour their trust.

Replying to a query about whether AL will take part in any parliamentary election under a BNP government in the future, Hasina said, "Why not? The Election Commission will hold the poll, not BNP. If they have any plot to manipulate the election, the people will understand and act accordingly."

About BNP's demand for a mid-term election, the AL chief asked her rival Khaleda Zia to explain the reason for the demand.

The PM said BNP lawmakers should resign first, and then bring no-confidence motion in the parliament.

"If the majority of lawmakers resign, the parliament will be dissolved and only then the election can be held. If you win, you can form the government," she said.

Hasina alleged that the opposition leader is attempting to portray a negative image of the country to discourage foreign investment, which grew significantly in the last two years of AL rule.

Talking about price hike of essentials, the PM said price hike and inflation is less than that of 2008. "People's buying capacity has increased; salaries and wages too," she said.

She said there is sufficient food stock now alongside the bumper production of Boro rice.

BNP claims

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founded, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia was told during her just-concluded US visit.

This was claimed yesterday by the opposition leader's press secretary Maruf Kamal Khan Sohel at a press conference at Khaleda's Gulshan office in the capital.

The BNP chief returned home on Sunday after a 15-day tour of the UK and the US.

"UK and US officials told the chairperson that Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus has been denied justice, and he was a victim of government vengeance," Maruf said.

"They also said the government has tarnished the country's image abroad by dishonouring him."

Maruf said Joseph Crowley, co-chairman of Bangladesh Caucus, already told the media about the US decision regarding the MDA contribution.

Maruf, who accompanied the leader of the opposition in parliament during her visit, did not give further details of his claim.

Maruf termed Khaleda's tour "hundred percent successful" and said it has brought honour for her as well as for the country. "No other leader of the opposition of our country before her got so much importance as she received," he added.

Other members of her entourage Shamsur Mobin Chowdhury, Sabiuddin Ahmed, Abdul Awal Mintoo, Shafik Rehman and Mushfiqul Fazal Ansari were present at the press conference.

Denying the allegation of extortion centring the visit, Shamsur Mobin Chowdhury, also vice chairman of the party, said, "Expatriate Bangladeshis provided the expenses of the tour. So, they can tell you about this issue."

Asked about the failure to organise a meeting with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, he said there were speculations [about such a meeting], and they did not make any formal announcement in this regard before the trip. "No leader of the opposition in Bangladesh could meet the US secretary of state in the past," he said.

Shamsur Mobin also said that during her meeting with US officials, the leader of the opposition emphasised direct contact between Washington and Dhaka.

Replying to a query regarding senior party leaders' absence from the chairperson's entourage, Maruf said its not true since two advisers to the chairperson and a vice chairman accompanied her during the visit.

On the clash between Awami League and BNP workers in London during Khaleda's visit, he said it was unexpected, and it showed unhealthy culture of the ruling party activists.

Mushfiqul Fazal said that during the chairperson's high profile meeting in UK, senior leaders including Gordon Brown and ministers enquired about the health condition of (BNP senior vice chairman) Tarique Rahman, and they also expressed their hope that Tarique will play a vital role in the development of Bangladesh in future.

Govt's U-Turn

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An inter-ministerial meeting will finalise the matter today, he added.

The issue came up following Malaysia's move to regularise the migrants who are now facing threats of arrests and abuses.

Malaysian authorities recently informed the diplomatic missions of manpower exporting countries of the decision. They said the regularisation process will start shortly and will be completed in three months.

Bangladeshi workers became irregular either for changing jobs or being cheated by fraudulent manpower agencies and the government must help them, insisted Mosharraf.

Earlier, he met with Maldivian Foreign Minister Ahmed Naseem. The minister said Maldives has agreed to fix the minimum monthly wage for the Bangladeshi workers at \$420.

Around 30,000 Bangladeshis are working in tourism and construction sectors in the island country.

Mosharraf also asked the Maldivian minister to regularise the undocumented Bangladeshi expatriates.

Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association President Selim Osman and, Centre for Policy Dialogue Executive Director Mustafizur Rahman and Brac Executive Director Mahabub Hossain spoke among others.

Mauritius

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crash were each given \$ 3,000 (Tk 220,650 approximately) by the Mauritian government as compensation in March.

"I am amazed by the steps taken by the Mauritius government. We have not seen such care for workers from any other country," the minister added.

During his stay in the country, Mosharraf visited factories and expressed satisfaction over the working condition there. Around 12,000 Bangladeshis work in the country's Tuna fish and textile sectors.

Mauritius is also satisfied about the performance of Bangladeshi workers and wants to recruit more workers, the minister said.

Bangladesh's potential.

She said businessmen are one of the main sufferers of the last caretaker regime. She said the business community's opinions are important.

She said parliament has no authority to keep the caretaker system in the constitution after it was declared illegal by the SC.

Citing the local government elections during this government's tenure, she said it has proved that a free and fair election is possible under a political government.

Participants of the discussion said Bangladesh, which loses farmland every year and faces risk of negative consequences of climate change, should look into the scope for farming in Africa to ensure food security for its growing population.

Former FBCCI president Tapan Chowdhury, Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Amjad Khan Chowdhury, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association President Shafiul Islam Mohiuddin, Bangladesh