

Ivy likely to get

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of them because of their devotion to the party". Acknowledging the contributions Shamim Osman and his family had made over the decades to the party, Hasina said Ivy was like a younger sister to Shamim. "It is the elder brother [Shamim] who should make a sacrifice," a source quoted Hasina as saying.

About Shamim, the AL chief said he was like her younger brother and that she would "take care of him," the sources added.

All the city corporation mayors are male, and it would be good for the country if there was a woman mayor, Hasina said in humour. "Some say that I always speak for women!"

AL insiders said Shamim might be called to Dhaka this morning, and if he agreed to accept the proposal, the party would make its position clear on supporting the candidate of its choice.

Presidium Member Obaidul Quader, acting general secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif and Organising Secretary Jahangir Kabir Nanak, who were present among others at the meeting with Hasina, were assigned to make the two contenders reach a consensus.

AL Presidium Member Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, advisory council members AMA Muihith and Moshir Rahman, organising secretaries Ahmed Hossain, Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, B M Mozammel Haque and Abu Sayeed Al Mahmud Swapan were also present.

Earlier in the morning, another round of discussions between senior AL leaders and Shamim and Ivy failed to reach a decision on the party's backing either of them in polls.

The party will make its position clear on the matter by tomorrow after talks with the Election Commission on the legalities involved, Obaidul Quader told The Daily Star.

"We've heard from Shamim and Ivy. It's a difficult choice to make but not impossible," said Quader.

If the electoral code of conduct does not permit a party to support a candidate, the AL will respect the rule, unlike the opposition BNP, which has endorsed Taimur Alam Khandoker, he added.

Hanif has been assigned to sit with the commission on behalf of the party. Also a special assistant to party chief Hasina, Hanif might meet the EC today.

AL leaders Sajeda, Quader and Hanif sat separately with Shamim and Ivy at Sajeda's Gulshan residence in the morning when both candidates vowed to contest the election and expressed confidence about coming out victorious with party support behind them.

Sajeda informed the party president of the outcome of the meeting held in the morning.

On October 2, Hasina herself met Shamim and Ivy separately. No decision on supporting either of the mayoral candidates emerged from that meeting.

Meanwhile, after a meeting with the returning officer in Narayanganj Election Commissioner Muhammad Sahul Hussain said there is no scope for giving party support in a nonpartisan election but there is no legal bar in this regard.

However, another Election Commissioner M Sakawat Hossain said the EC would take action if it came by allegations of party pressure on a candidate to quit the race. He did not, however, specify the nature of the action.

He added, though, that the commission could do nothing if a candidate pulled out on his own.

Meanwhile, the mayoral and councillor candidates yesterday commenced campaigning in NCC, reports our Narayanganj correspondent.

No easy banking

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bank officials forcing the farmers to open accounts with a minimum deposit of Tk 1,000 with additional money taken as bribes.

"I know we as farmers can open bank account at Tk 10 only. But here we didn't get the opportunity at Chalna branch of Sonali Bank. We had to pay Tk 1,000 with additional Tk 100 to Tk 300 for which we didn't get any receipt," Makhon Mondol of Kamarkhola Unionsaid.

Makhon said some 862 farmers had to pay additional money as bribes to own a bank account.

Haran Mondol who opened a bank account with the same branch on August 9 echoed Makhon Mondol.

Dacope Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) M Doulutuzaman Khan terming it unfortunate said "We'll take action against those who are realising additional money apart from charging farmers Tk 1000 for opening account instead of Tk 10."

However, M Ibrahim Hossain, manager of Chalna branch of Sonali Bank denied the allegation of receiving extra money and claimed that they did not get the Bangladesh Bank (BB) circular at that time.

A BB senior official said they would look into the matter and action would be taken if the allegation is proved.

The government and the central bank were widely

lauded for the decision to allow farmers to open bank accounts with a deposit of Tk 10.

Earlier, BB had directed the state-owned commercial and specialised banks to allow farmers to open accounts with an initial deposit of Tk 10 to enable them to get government subsidies without hassle.

In the circular issued on January 17 last year, BB said the banks must do away with the condition of keeping a minimum balance for farmers' accounts. They must not charge fees for their services either.

Any farmer can open such accounts showing national ID card or birth registration certificate or the card issued by the Department of Agricultural Extension.

Meanwhile, the villagers in Dacope have been facing trouble in withdrawing the government-released fund for Aila victims amid allegations that the Union Parishad members are demanding bribes for releasing the second phase fund.

"Tk 20,000 was allocated from the Prime Minister's fund for each family affected by Aila and they had already received Tk 12,000 in the first phase and they will get Tk 8,000 in the second phase," the UNO of Dacopesaid.

"Investigation is on in this regard and the corrupt members will not be involved in disbursing the second phase fund."

New scrap shipyards

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and we are preparing a report which will be sent to the Prime Minister's Office within a week or two," he added.

Khorshed said the team would need to collect local maps and check the depth of the Baleshwar river at its confluence with the Bay of Bengal.

The five-member team that visited the area included the chief engineer of the Directorate of Shipping, managing director of Chittagong Dry Dock, director, technical, of Steel & Engineering Corporation, and a representative of Bangladesh Ship Breakers Association.

Ship breaking yards in Sitakunda continue to operate in unregulated fashion, and in the most rudimentary ways. Every end-of-life ship is 25 to 30 years old, and contains highly hazardous substances such as asbestos, PCB, PVC and lubricants.

The Sitakunda ship breaking yards have heavily polluted the land and air, as well as the bay, where fish species have been wiped out.

Hundreds of people working in the yards, almost totally unprotected owing to an absence of safety gear, are exposed to toxins and fatal accidents.

Rizwana Hasan of the Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association has come down hard on the plan. As she says, "When the government has failed to regulate the existing ship breaking industries in Sitakunda, the expansion of this industry in another ecologically sensitive coastal area by the Sundarbans is totally unacceptable."

"Does the government want to pollute the coastal eco-system and destroy the coastal forests? Has it not learnt from the polluted beaches, disappearing mangroves and heavily contaminated land and water of Sitakunda?" she asked.

Ronald Halder, a bird specialist and nature conservationist, said the Baleshwar river is the primary fishing zone for thousands of people in the area, and the largest in the country, and jeopardising the river will be a disaster for millions.

"Moreover, the Sundarbans is near. Such a hazardous industry will threaten the entire eco-system there," he added.

Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and China are the top scrap ship importers of the world.

Due to a lack of regulations, Bangladesh has become an international scrap ship dumping ground.

If scrap ships continue to arrive at the current rate, the

country within the next 20 years will be left with 79,000 tons of asbestos and 2,70,000 tons of polychlorinated bi-phenyl, both of which are non-recyclable hazardous wastes.

Uncertainty

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suspended its \$1.2 billion credit to Bangladesh for the project until such time as the government resolved the issue of alleged irregularities in the appointment of the consultant for the project.

The Daily Star could not, however, confirm the news despite repeated attempts to do so.

The finance minister returned home on Saturday after a three-week visit to the United States, where he attended the annual meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. He also held talks with high-level WB officials in Washington.

Preferring anonymity, a finance ministry official said Muihith last night had a meeting with the prime minister to discuss the crisis over WB's funding for the project.

Muihith is expected to brief journalists on the matter today.

The minister said yesterday that even if the government decided to investigate the allegations of irregularities, it could not wait until the probe was completed.

Asked whether the government was looking for other financiers, Muihith replied in the negative.

He said \$1.2 billion was a big amount and the government needed the money to implement the project.

On the alleged irregularities in the appointment of the consultant for the project, the minister said many quarters raised corruption allegations, but in most cases they turned out to have been baseless. Pointing to two earlier corruption allegations involving the project, the minister noted that neither of those had turned out to be true.

Meanwhile, a parliamentary committee has criticised the World Bank for raising the question of irregularities involving the project "on the basis of an e-mail from an unidentified source."

The parliamentary standing committee on the communications ministry had checked all tender documents of the project but could not find any instance of irregularity or corruption, said committee chief Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

"We found that the World Bank had raised the allegation of corruption on the basis of an e-mail to the organisation from an unidentified source," said Rahman, a lawmaker of the ruling party.

Bangladesh embassy officials in Riyadh said all eight Bangladeshis executed in the kingdom were buried at the Riyadh Central Graveyard on Saturday.

6 muggers

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also beat up and injured the traders.

Police seized the motorcycles, which have no valid documents, and recovered the phones and around Tk 5,000-6,000 from the muggers.

The arrested -- Kanchan Miah, 20, Jobaer Hossain Nishan, 20, Tuhin, 22, Hasan Miah, 19, and Md Shahin, 21, Monir Hossain, 20, -- and their associate Ali Hossain, 20, who fled, are the residents of Taltola, Agargaon.

The six told police that they used to mug at different points in the city by night.

Law enforcers raided Taltola in the morning but did not find Ali.

6 Hizb-ut

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Ameer of Hizb-ut Tawhid was holding a meeting at the house of Md Suhan in Baje Kajla area of the city, a team of Rab-5 led by company commander Squadron Leader Kamrul Islam raided the area around 4:30am and arrested the six, according to a press release.

The team also seized 200 leaflets and 10 books of the Prothom Alo editor and some of his people had intentionally been publishing what he called false reports to damage the reputation of his brother, a former lawmaker of the ruling Awami League.

Claiming that the daily was established through defrauding money from the Indian separatist group Ulfa (United Liberation Front of Asom), Nasim said it financed local terrorist organisations to make the country a safe haven for terrorism.

"The Prothom Alo was involved in the August 21 grenade attack on Sheikh Hasina's rally and it also came up with the minus-two

5 more

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guard in 2007. National Human Rights Commission Chairman Mizanur Rahman said the beatings of the Bangladeshis in public had traumatised people at large. The executions went against the spirit of international human rights laws which say that no penalty should violate human dignity, he said.

"It can take a lifetime for some to recover from a trauma," Mizanur Rahman said.

Sultana Kamal, executive director of Ain O Salish Kendra, said, "There are no words to condemn the execution of the eight Bangladeshis. This is barbaric, appalling and a crime against humanity. The right to life has been taken away from the accused."

Sultana Kamal said such executions went against the very ethics of human rights.

She wondered why the issue had not been communicated to the UN or raised with other human rights bodies.

In his reaction, Shahdeen Malik, an eminent jurist, said, "Behaving in public is a medieval punishment and contrary to all norms of civilized society. It goes against the prohibition on cruel and inhuman punishment as enshrined in our constitution and in international legal instruments."

He said Bangladesh had sufficient leverage with Saudi Arabia and should have done more to save the convicts.

Adilur Rahman Khan, secretary of the human rights body Odhikar, said, "We think our government and the embassy have failed to protect the Bangladeshis. It should not have happened."

He said the government should have done more to persuade Saudi Arabia to hand over the convicts to Bangladesh and allowed them to have the sentences carried out on their home soil.

Their execution in Saudi Arabia had exposed the weakness of Bangladesh's foreign policy, he noted.

The news of the execution of the eight Bangladeshis came as a deep shock to their family members.

Fifty-five-year-old Sufia Begum, mother of Matiar Rahman, one of the eight executed on Friday, has not been able to come to terms with the fact that she will never see her son again.

"Oh, my son, come back to me," she wept as she held a picture of her son at her house in Naranpur village in Faridpur.

"We want to see the face of our son," said Abdul Hye, father of Suman Mia, who was also beheaded on Friday, at his home in Kishoreganj.

Bangladesh embassy officials in Riyadh said all eight Bangladeshis executed in the kingdom were buried at the Riyadh Central Graveyard on Saturday.

Osman pulls for Osman

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appearing in the Bangla daily Prothom Alo. Shamim Osman is a mayoral candidate in the Narayanganj City Corporation polls.

If necessary, said the infuriated JP lawmaker, he would lead thousands of people from Narayanganj to Dhaka to teach Matiar Rahman, the Prothom Alo editor, a good lesson. Nasim Osman made the threat at a press briefing at the Narayanganj Press Club, reports our Narayanganj correspondent.

Meanwhile, the Jatiya Party has said it does not endorse such aggressive remarks from its parliamentarian at the national daily in question.

Nasim, lawmaker for Narayanganj-5 constituency, said the Bangla daily and some other like-minded print and electronic media had been hatching a conspiracy against his sibling over the elections scheduled for October 30.

He alleged that the Prothom Alo editor and some of his people had intentionally been publishing what he called false reports to damage the reputation of his brother, a former lawmaker of the ruling Awami League.

Claiming that the daily was established through defrauding money from the Indian separatist group Ulfa (United Liberation Front of Asom), Nasim said it financed local terrorist organisations to make the country a safe haven for terrorism.

"The Prothom Alo was involved in the August 21 grenade attack on Sheikh Hasina's rally and it also came up with the minus-two

formulae and is an actor of 1/11," an angry Nasim added.

Nasim said the editor had published an article in his daily in favour of forcing Hasina and Khaleda out of the country during the period of the last interim government.

He went on to say that the vernacular daily could do anything harmful as it had published a cartoon of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) and later sought pardon over the incident.

Accusing Selina Hayat Ivy of filling in canals when she was mayor of the now-defunct Narayanganj municipality, Nasim said she had misappropriated money while allocating shops in a market.

Highlighting various development works undertaken by himself and his brother, he assured locals of establishing a modern hospital and a private university in Narayanganj soon.

"Shamim Osman removed a 200-year-old brothel from Narayanganj in the greater interest of the people. Now, this daily is in favour of re-establishing the brothel," Nasim alleged.

At the news conference, Nasim also stood by his other brother, Selim Osman, saying that Selim had been elected president of BKMEA, Narayanganj Chamber and Commerce and Narayanganj Club unopposed.

Citing examples of his landslide victory at the 2008 general election despite propaganda by the Prothom Alo against him, a confident Nasim hoped that his brother would win the mayoral poll defying all conspiracies and yellow journalism

by the daily.

Nasim, however, invited all national and international journalists to visit Narayanganj on election day to cover the voting.

He brushed aside all allegations of terrorist activities, land grabbing, control over all sand and garment by-products businesses and use of muscle power levelled against him and his two brothers.

It may be noted that on October 7, the Prothom Alo published a news story titled "Kingdom of three Osmans in Narayanganj".

NASIM FACES MUSIC The Jatiya Party yesterday criticised its lawmaker Nasim Osman for threatening the Prothom Alo.

Talking to The Daily Star over telephone, the party's Secretary General Ruhul Amin Hawlader and Presidium Member Ziauddin Ahmed said the Jatiya Party did not endorse any violent behaviour or aggressive comments on the part of any of its leaders.

Ruhul Amin Hawlader said, "We never support the idea that a Jatiya Party MP will speak in such a way. We need to think about the matter."

"The Jatiya Party believes in the freedom of the media. We do not expect that any of our leaders will threaten a newspaper for its reports," Hawlader said, adding that the party also expects objective journalism from the media.

Ziauddin Ahmed said, "We believe in democracy and democracy means tolerance. We don't expect any statement from any of our party leaders which violates democratic values."

Khaleda leads road march

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warned that if the road march is obstructed, tougher programmes will be announced.

Top leaders of the four-party combine that includes Jamaat-e-Islami, Islami Oikya Jote and Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP) as well as leaders of Khelafat Majlish and other like-minded parties will join the road march.

Central and local units of BNP have made all preparations to make the programme a success. Local units will give warm receptions to the party chairperson when she passes through their areas on her way to Sylhet.

Sylhet BNP yesterday brought out a huge procession on the eve of Khaleda's arrival in the city. Central leaders including standing committee member Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain were present.

Meanwhile, the party accused the government of obstructing the road march programme by forcing the car owners not to rent those out.

Party Vice Chairman Sadeque Hossain Khoka,

who is convener of the road march management committee, said yesterday it will be the biggest road march in recent times since about 3,000 cars will be in the motorcade led by Khaleda Zia. "Starting at 10:00am, we will reach Sylhet any time at night," he said.

Besides the four-party alliance and like-minded parties, Bikalpa Dhara and Liberal Democratic Party will join the road march, Khoka said.

Khoka said they have held a meeting with police officials to ensure security and sought active cooperation from traffic police for smooth and peaceful start of the road march.

"We understand the city dwellers will have to face difficulties from 10:00 am to 12:00 noon as big motorcade will pass through Shapla Chattar, Ittefaq crossing and Jatrabari in the capital, and move to the highway towards Sylhet," Joint Convener of BNP city unit Abu Sayeed Khokon said after a meeting with police officials.

BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said yesterday,

"Chairperson will lead road marches across the country to unite the people and then we will go for a final movement." Fakhrul said this at a discussion in the city organised by Zehad Smriti Parishad to mark the 21st death anniversary of former Jatiyatadabi Chhatra Dal leader Naziruddin Zehad.

On September 27, Khaleda announced three road marches towards Sylhet, Rajshahi and Chittagong. The party later postponed Chittagong road march due to the ensuing Eid-ul-Azha and hajj.

She will lead road march towards Rajshahi on October 18.

Fakhrul said yesterday Khaleda Zia will lead road marches towards Chittagong, Khulna, Barisal and Rangpur after the Eid to realise her demand for restoration of caretaker government system for holding parliamentary elections.

The BNP chairperson categorically declared that her party will not allow holding any parliamentary elections without a non-party caretaker government system.

No greetings

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Pro-opposition lawyers brought out a procession and hoisted black flags on the SC premises.

At an emergency meeting, SCBA decided to take action against those who greeted the judges in defiance of its decision.

It alleges Justice Shamsuddin has violated the code of conduct for the judges by commenting that "Ahmed's death was normal". The judge made the comment at a talk show in London.

Meanwhile, briefing the press at his office, Attorney General Mahubey Alam said the pro-BNP lawyers refrained from exchanging customary greetings with the judges for political gains.

About the allegation against Justice Shamsuddin Chowdhury, Mahubey Alam said he was not aware of the matter.

The character of the talk show he (Justice Chowdhury) participated in would determine if he had breached the code of conduct, the attorney general added.

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The SCBA also urged the chief justice to withdraw the judicial power of Justice AHM Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik and take action against him for his recent comment over MU Ahmed's death.

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Seven illegal migrants die in fire in Turkey

AFP, Istanbul

Turkish police arrested two people after the death of seven illegal Afghan immigrants in a fire in an Istanbul shanty yesterday, Anatolia news agency reported.

The bodies were found in the house after the fire was extinguished in suburban Sultangazi, Anatolia said. The immigrants could not escape the fire as the door was locked from outside, it said.

Police said the victims, all male, were Afghans who illegally entered Turkey and wanted to travel on to western Europe, Anatolia said.

Police was also searching for a third person with a criminal record for human smuggling. The cause of the fire was unknown.

Investigators found two Indian passports in the house, news channel NTV said.

4 Indians

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college, told The Daily Star that the four Indian were dropped off a microbus in front of the college around 6:30am yesterday. He could not say who dropped them off, our Sylhet correspondent reports.

The freed students are Tousef Ahmed and Danesh Batt, third and fourth year MBBS students, and interns Tosaddek Rashid and Amir Amin Reshmi.

The principal had claimed that Rapid Action Battalion personnel picked up the four students Friday at the college dormitory.

Talking to journalists after a meeting at the home ministry yesterday morning, IGP Hasan Mahmud Khandker admitted that law enforcers picked up the four Indian nationals in Sylhet. He declined to say which agency detained them.

Asked whether the students were arrested in connection with the bomb blast at New Delhi High Court in September, Home Minister Shahara Khatun declined to comment. She only said it is a sensitive issue and an investigation is underway.

On the other two missing students, the principal said Indian national Wasim attended college last on September 22 and then he went on leave. The college authority filed no general diary in this connection as they could not be sure whether Wasim is actually missing.

A PTI report said Indian authorities claimed that they arrested Wasim near the border between Bangladesh and India. However, Indian dailies quoting Wasim's family members reported that Indian authorities arrested him at New Delhi airport last Wednesday.

The college principal said they filed a general diary in connection with Ashrafuzzaman Chowdhury being missing. Ashrafuzzaman is from Bianibazar of Sylhet and he went to college last on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, doctor Rashid Ahmed, assistant registrar of North East Medical College Hospital in South Surma suburb of Sylhet, was released Saturday after plainclothes law enforcers picked him up at his office Thursday afternoon.

He told reporters that some law enforcers took him to an unknown location blindfolded and interrogated him about the New Delhi blast for around 12 hours. He said they were trying to know if the four Indian medical students were involved in the blast.

He said a few foreign nationals also might have quizzed him since they were speaking English and Hindi.

Pro-migrant

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the state economically. However, critics argue that it condones entry into the US without proper documentation.

California's last governor, the Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger, refused to sign the legislation.

About 2,500 students are expected to qualify for grants under the new law.

Governor Brown, a Democrat, said the law would benefit the state by giving top students a chance to improve their lives and, he said, "the lives of all of us".

But, in a state with a