

# Abul is corrupt

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involvement in corruption in the Padma bridge project. "He has guts; he has patriotism.... That's why he could resign."

"Abul Hossain is not a patriot. Rather, he is a shameless person as he quit 10 months after the World Bank made the allegation of corruption against him," BNP standing committee member Khandaker Mosharrif Hossain told a seminar at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

Denouncing her remarks, Mosharrif said the prime minister has been batting for a corrupt person and she will not be able to idealise the person who has tarnished the country's image in the international arena.

"If anyone can become a patriot by indulging in corruption, then the definition of patriotism will have to be changed. The prime minister should have called him [Abul] 'shameless,'" he mentioned.

Another BNP standing committee member Brig Gen (ret'd) ASM Hannan Shah said the premier should follow the example set by Abul Hossain to prove her patriotism, reports UNB.

"Sheikh Hasina is a corrupt prime minister and she also should set an example by quitting her post," he told a discussion at the Jatiya Press Club.

Many leaders of AL and its allies expressed frustration over the prime minister's remarks and felt embarrassed to talk about it.

"We are frustrated at the prime minister's comment on a controversial man," an AL leader told The Daily Star, preferring not to be named.

When the party chief backs Abul Hossain, the others have nothing to say, he added.

Echoing Hasina's views, AL acting general secretary Mahbulul Alam Hanif said,

"Syed Abul Hossain has stepped down for the sake of the country.... He loves the country,"

He was addressing a discussion of Swetchhasebak League at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB).

The AL leader slammed BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir for accusing the government for the alleged corruption in Padma bridge project.

"He [Alamgir] made pointless remarks by claiming that the resignation of Syed Abul Hossain from the cabinet proves the corruption charge," said Hanif, also a special assistant to the prime minister.

**REACTIONS OF OTHER LEADERS**  
Mahmudur Rahman Manna, convenor of a newly formed civil society platform Ngorik Oikko, questioned as to why the premier had to brand a person as patriot and why this certificate had to be given in London?

If the former communications minister had guts, as claimed by Hasina, he would have resigned when allegation of corruption was made against him, he said.

When Tanjim Ahmed Sohel Taj resigned as state minister for home and later as a lawmaker, the premier did not brand him as patriot or said he has guts, noted Manna, an ex-organising secretary of AL. "If anyone in the present government showed guts, it was Sohel Taj."

He, however, said Abul Hossain has done good for the country by stepping down.

**Workers Party of Bangladesh President** Rashed Khan Menon said Abul has resigned "for the sake of national interest."

"We had urged him earlier to resign for maintaining transparency and it

would have been better had he resigned earlier," he mentioned.

Menon, however, did not comment on the prime minister's remarks on Abul Hossain.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haque Inu said only the people can certify a political leader as a patriot.

Had Abul Hossain resigned earlier, the government could be successful to get the loan from the World Bank, he told this newspaper.

Chief of Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Janata League Abdul Kader Siddique said people did not expect such a comment from the prime minister. "Her comment shows lack of accountability in our democracy."

Anwar Hossain Manju, chairman of Jatiya Party (Manju), said the prime minister could make such a comment if she was convinced that the allegations made against Abul Hossain were "fictitious."

Former Dhaka University (DU) vice-chancellor Prof Emajuddin Ahmed questioned, if Abul Hossain is a patriot, then who is not?

The premier's support for him will give a message to people that "the plunderer of public money" has legitimate right to be in a political party, added the former VC.

Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, incumbent VC of DU, said the prime minister has appreciated the resignation of the minister, which is an example to show respect for democracy.

The World Bank in September last year had suspended its \$1.2 billion credit for the \$2.97 billion Padma bridge project making allegation of corruption.

The lead financier cancelled the funding last month.

## Prices of edible

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availability of some leading brands such as Rupchanda and Teer, which were short in supply during the last five days.

Traders at Palassy Bazar were selling the five-litre bottle of Rupchanda brand at Tk 665, which was Tk 680 a week ago.

Price of one-litre bottle of different brands was Tk135-140. It was Tk132-135 a week ago, according to Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB).

Prices of some iftar items including pulse and gram, however, remained stable compared to the previous week.

Pulse and gram were selling at Tk112-115 and Tk 80-90 per kg respectively, the TCB data shows.

Sugar price yesterday remained stable thanks to the government intervention. Retailers were selling sugar at Tk 55-56 a kg.

The government last week slashed the price by Tk 5 per kg. Therefore, state-run Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation is selling sugar at Tk 55 instead of Tk 60.

The price of both packed and loose flour, however, went up further yesterday.

Packed flour was traded at Tk44-48 a kg, which is 3.37 percent higher than a week ago. Loose flour was sold at Tk 40-42 which was Tk 37-38 a week ago, the TCB data shows.

The prices of some vegetables and spices such as cucumber, aubergine, potato and onion also remained unchanged.

Traders at Karwan Bazar were selling cucumber at Tk 25 a kg and charging Tk 30-40 for each kg of aubergines.

The price of eggs yesterday fell by Tk 1 per four pieces, which sold at Tk 33-34.

## Row over

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overtake Bachchu's rickshaw when they were crossing a road near the Jagannath Hall of DU around 12:30pm, said Sirajul Islam, officer-in-charge of Shahbagh Police Station, quoting Bachchu.

As Bachchu delayed in making way for Saju's rickshaw, the two exchanged heated words.

At one stage, they stopped pulling their rickshaws and got involved in a punch-up. Suja became unconscious when Bachchu punched him in his chest.

Students of DU caught Bachchu and whisked Suja to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where the doctors declared him dead.

They later handed over Bachchu to police.

## 3 League

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Tangail district Chhatra League.

Tangail's Superintendent of Police AKM Hafiz Akter said the three abducted Pritish Chandra Bosu, 52, an employee of the family planning department, from Tangail General Hospital area at gun point on Wednesday.

The same night, over phone they demanded Tk 10 lakh from the victim's wife as ransom and also threatened to kill Pritish if the money was not given, he said.

After the family informed the matter to police, the law enforcers tracked the phone and launched the drive in Hugra Char area under the Sadar upazila.

A team of Tangail Model Police Station led by its Officer-in-Charge Nazrul Islam raided the place yesterday morning, arrested the three and rescued

## Key Zardari aide wins back parliament seat

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's de facto interior minister, a close aide to President Asif Ali Zardari, was sworn back into parliament yesterday just weeks after being forced to step down over his alleged British citizenship.

Rehman Malik was elected unopposed at a by-election in the same seat for the Senate, or upper house of parliament, which he held prior to his June suspension, paving the way for him to be reconfirmed as a cabinet minister.

The current drought has been compared to a 1988 crisis that cut production by 20 percent and cost the economy tens of billions of dollars.

The full impact of the drought on food prices won't

# PM's remark

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its dissolution.

This means all lawmakers would still be holding office and seeking re-election when the nation goes to polls. This raises the question if there would be a level playing field during the next election.

Countries like the UK, the birthplace of the Westminster system, India, the world's largest parliamentary democracy, New Zealand, Canada, and Australia do not have such provisions in their constitutions. Parliaments in those countries get dissolved before elections.

In many countries, including the UK and India, the outgoing cabinet stays in office during the parliamentary polls. The outgoing cabinet acts as an interim government and refrains from making any major and policymaking decisions during that period.

The prime minister should have specified names of countries where such constitutional provision exists allowing all lawmakers to stay in office and seek re-election. Otherwise, people might get confused by her remarks.

The odd provision had actually been present in

Bangladesh constitution since 1972. But the rule did not apply as none of the parliaments since then and until 2001 actually completed their tenures.

With the introduction of caretaker government system from 1996, the provision was removed and a new provision was introduced that elections would be held within 90 days of a parliament's dissolution.

The seventh parliament was the first to complete its five-year tenure in 2001 and after its expiry a parliamentary election was held. The eighth parliament also completed its five-year tenure. But the ninth parliamentary election, scheduled for January 22, 2007, could not be held on time due to proclamation of the state of emergency in the wake of grave political turmoil.

Through the new amendments to the constitution, the ninth parliament dissolved the caretaker government system and restored the provision of the 1972 constitution that says the elections should be held within 90 days prior to a parliament's dissolution on expiry of its five-year tenure.

This has ensured that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government

remains in power during the next elections and functions in full swing.

On Thursday, when a five-member team of All Party British Parliamentary Group for Bangladesh met her, she made the remark apparently to defend the cancellation of the caretaker government system and her government's staying in power during the polls. She had made the remark on a number of occasions before as well.

Her government staying in power during the polls has triggered widespread fear of possible political unrest ahead of the next polls as the main opposition BNP-led political parties have declared that they would not take part in the polls if the ruling Awami League-led government stayed in office.

Prime Minister Sheikh

Hasina, if she meant what she had said, has to make some more moves to restore people's confidence in her government. Her government must amend the constitution again and remove the provision that allows legislators to remain in office during the polls.

Otherwise, the demand for a non-partisan government would only get louder.

# Cuba offers US

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"Any day they (Americans) want it, we will sit with them at a negotiating table," the Cuban president proclaimed, clad in military uniform.

But he insisted the conversation would go both ways: "Equal to equal, we will also discuss subjects concerning the United States."

The United States has maintained a five-decade economic embargo on Cuba.

State Department Assistant Secretary Mike Hammer said that while the United States was willing to talk with Cuba, the Communist authorities first had to ensure rights for their people.

"This administration has repeatedly stated that the US government is open to forging a new relationship

with Cuba, but Castro's government must begin by allowing the Cuban people to exercise their human rights and determine their future," Hammer told a press conference.

"Our message is very clear to the Castro government... that they need to begin to allow the political freedoms that the Cuban people demands," Hammer added.

Washington has demanded a "full and transparent investigation" of a leading activist's death, which Cuban authorities say was a car accident.

Paya, an engineer and fervent Roman Catholic, was one of the first dissidents against the Castro regime to seek wholesale political and economic change. He won the European parliament's Sakharov prize for human rights in 2002.

# The show is on

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Olympic legend Steven Redgrave is the favorite but another man has emerged despite not winning a Olympic medal in his active lifetime.

Sir Roger Bannister, the first man to run a mile in less than four minutes, emerged as another favorite after William Hill stopped taking bets on the 83-year-old lighting the Olympic cauldron, after the betting company received a flurry of big bets.

On London's biggest sporting day for quite some time, the weather returned to something that can be defined as profoundly British. The cool air, stiff breeze and the rains came following the uncharacteristically bright sunshine that had dominated the last few days.

On the streets volunteers dressed in the bright pink jackets or purple shirts of the Olympics seem present in every corner. The British are generally toned down but even through their stiff upper-lip demeanor you can see that the excitement is palpable, if not yet overflowing. Olympic lanes are clearly marked out and tailbacks are commonplace on London's narrow roads.

But roadside bars are ready for a big night out, with big screens and special menus. London's famous parks too are full to the brim, with Victoria and Hyde Park both hosting live events on giant screens and accompanying them with interesting tidbits like zip-lines or 'have-a-go' events.

The events have proved incredibly popular, especially for those not lucky enough to bag a ticket to London's big night. Celebrities too are set to

come out in force, with Mohammad Ali expected to play a role in the ceremony alongside David Beckham. Hollywood stars Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie are also in London.

But ultimately it will be the sporting superstars like Usain Bolt, Michael Phelps and Roger Federer who will dazzle, while an army of unsung competitors are also aiming for gold.

Phelps, whose eight golds in Beijing took his overall medal tally to 16, needs three more to surpass the all-time record of 18.

His seven-event programme gives him plenty of scope to make more Games history and anchor a US team determined to continue its dominance against Australia and a Chinese squad spearheaded by 1500m free world record-holder Sun Yang.

One of his biggest challengers is teammate Ryan Lochte, who has emerged as a serious threat in the 200m medley and 400m medley.

Australia is bringing in the big artillery with James "The Missile" Magnussen and James "The Rocket" Roberts, in the prestigious 100m freestyle.

The US have a "Missile" of their own, however, in 17-year-old Missy Franklin, who is set to become the first US woman to swim seven events at one Games.

South Africa's Oscar Pistorius, known as 'Blade Runner' for his carbon fibre prosthetic running blades, will make history as the first double amputee to compete at an Olympics.

Bradley Wiggins, fresh from his historic Tour de France triumph, and a powerful British team will fire up the home crowd in the cycling.

Castro meanwhile also denounced what he said were small groups of dissidents who want to "recreate in Cuba what happened in Libya and Syria."

Libya's long-time leader Muammar Gaddafi was overthrown last year by rebels with Nato support, and Syria's Bashar al-Assad is waging a bloody campaign against rebels, with the US and other western nations demanding he step aside.

July 26 is the anniversary of the 1953 attacks that Fidel Castro and his supporters mounted against two military barracks. Although these first attacks were unsuccessful, they are considered the beginning of the armed struggle that ultimately led to Fidel Castro's seizure of power on January 1, 1959.

His brother took over as head of state in 2006.

## BNP eyes

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demand for the restoration of the caretaker government system.

BNP high-ups were interested in bringing Gonoforum, Krishak Sramik Janata League, JSD (Rob), Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) and Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) into the BNP-led alliance, said sources.

When asked, acting Gonoforum general secretary Subrata Chowdhury said BNP leaders had contacted them but they decided not to join the BNP-led combine.

"Though we have some issues in common, the party cannot go for any movement with Jamaat. We will hold a convention soon in the capital to express our views."

CPB General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim, said, "We have ideological differences with BNP and Jamaat. We even think that BNP and Awami League are the same. We are working to create an alternative political force."

BNP leaders have been in contact with JSD (Rob) President ASM Abdur Rob and Krishak Sramik Janata League President Abdul Kader Siddiqui, said party insiders.

Abdur Rob told The Daily Star that they were trying to form a third political force keeping aside BNP, Awami League and Jamaat.

"So, there is no question of joining any alliance." Kader Siddiqui had already met the BNP chairperson and clarified his position on Jamaat.

BDB leader Mahi B Chowdhury had attended the main opposition's June 11 rally and expressed solidarity with the demand for the restoration of the caretaker government system.

But the BDB was not interested to join the BNP-led alliance, said sources.

## Journos allowed

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Awami League Joint General Secretary Mahbulul Alam Hanif as the mediator.

Senior officials of the hospital including its director and doctors' association leaders, and journalist leaders around 8:30pm yesterday went to Shahbagh Police Station and separately asked for withdrawal of the cases.

Following Wednesday's incident, journalist leaders filed two cases with Shahbagh police. On Thursday, doctors lodged two cases against journalists over the same incident and with the same police station.

However, even though the hospital authorities at that meeting lifted the restriction that the journalists need to take prior permission before entering the hospital, they were not allowed before 9:00pm yesterday.

Throughout the day, many journalists from different newspapers and television channels were asked by the security guards at the emergency department gate to take permission from the resident physician (RP) of the section. However, as the RP was not at his office, journalists failed to get. They could not enter the hospital through four other gates.

The journalists were allowed in after 9:00pm, Azim Uddin Chowdhury Bulbul, DMCH correspondent of ABC Radio, told The Daily Star. "We entered the hospital without permission shortly after 9:00pm as we asked police for withdrawal of the cases we filed against the doctors over Wednesday's incident," he added.

Mushfiqur Rahman, deputy director of DMCH, yesterday told The Daily Star that some junior doctors did not accept the authorities' decision. "I hope that we will be able to convince them soon," he headed.

The restriction on journalists was imposed on July 22 following a news item published in national dailies and telecast on television channels about the alleged assault of a patient by a doctor.

Doctors of the hospital also assaulted journalists several times following the news. On Wednesday, interns harassed journalists when the patient, the alleged victim of July 19, went to the journalists' office at the hospital to share his experience.

The doctors also locked the gate of outdoor section of the hospital Thursday morning.

Regarding this, Mushfiqur said, "We will try to resolve the problem through discussion with the doctors and open the outdoor section tomorrow (today) morning."