

Arrest of guard

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journalist couple.

Addressing the hunger strike programme, Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, president of a faction of BFUJ, announced that journalists would stage a sit-in in front of the home ministry on January 1.

In response to the annoyance shown by the members of the parliamentary body over Rab's failure to unearth the sensational murder case, the elite force boss said they had deployed secret agents to nab the night guard, Enamul, soon.

"And we hope to reveal all the matters behind the journalist couple murder after the night guard's arrest," Mujibul Haq Chunnun, a Jatiya Party lawmaker and also the member of the parliamentary body, quoted Rab DG as saying in the meeting.

Lawmakers expressed their dismay saying why the security guard could not be arrested yet and how he had escaped.

The Rab DG said they were not investigating the case from the beginning. And it was the task of the police officers who were in charge of the investigation at the preliminary stage.

Mokhlesur also said they were waiting for a forensic report on some items including clothes of Sagar-Runi.

The committee members also asked top police officials to remain alert as they apprehend that Jamaat-Shibir men might launch attack on the International Crimes Tribunal.

"Security in the tribunal is not adequate. We, therefore, recommend to beef up security measures there," Sayedul Hoque, chief of the committee, told reporters after the meeting.

Tk 4,811 cr

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the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of parliament to realise the money," Hakeem told The Daily Star, expressing the hope that the present PAC would succeed in doing so.

The Office of Comptroller and Auditor General (OCAG), the country's accounting watchdog, produced eight audit reports on the banking division, the internal resources division and the finance division -- all under the finance ministry -- questioning spending of Tk 1,053.80 crore.

The power, energy and mineral resources ministry was held responsible for unaccounted-for spending of Tk 1,292.77 crore.

The auditor also charged the communications ministry with irregularities of Tk 426.32 crore, the rail ministry of Tk 802.53 crore, the housing and public works ministry of Tk 594.76 crore, the local government and rural development ministry of Tk 112.23 crore and the civil aviation and tourism ministry of Tk 116.47 crore.

The environment and forest ministry got a clean chit as the audit watchdog did not find any irregularities in its spending.

The industries, defence, food and disaster management, shipping, agriculture, liberation war affairs, fisheries and foreign affairs ministries were found involved in irregularities of Tk 259.59 crore.

Hakeem said the PAC this year alone realised about Tk 8,000 crore in recovery and adjustment.

"The budget allocated for our office this year is Tk 94 crore and we have contributed to the recovery of Tk 8,000 crore," he said, calling for more resources for the constitutional body so that it could contribute more to unravelling financial corruption.

A senior official of the OCAG said they had raised the objections against those ministries because they were certain about the irregularities. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the ministries would, however, get a chance to defend their positions when the Public Accounts Committee summoned their secretaries, seeking explanation.

At least Tk 50,000 crore remained unrealised since 1972 as the successive public accounts committees had not been proactive with a few exceptions like the present one, he added.

CAG Hakeem will place the audit and accounts reports before the president who will then send those to parliament.

Nizami, Sayedee

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Even though Tribunal-1 had fixed today for hearing all the petitions, it yesterday allowed barrister Moudud Ahmed, also a BNP leader, to place his submission for war crimes accused Jamaat Nayeb-e-Ameer Sayedee.

Moudud claimed that former chairman of Tribunal-1 could not maintain independence of the tribunal; hence the war crimes case against Sayedee should be reinitiated for the sake of a fair trial.

Mentioning some of the "leaked Skype conversation", Moudud claimed that the independence of the tribunal had been damaged.

Quoting section 6 (2A) of the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, Moudud said to comply with the act, the tribunal should reinitiate the case against Sayedee.

According to 6 (2A) of the act, the tribunal shall be independent in the exercise of its judicial functions and shall ensure a fair trial.

Moudud argued whether a fair trial would be ensured if the tribunal carried on from where the former chairman left the case.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam on the contrary told The Daily Star that defence counsel's petition for retrial had no legal base since the judge against whom they brought the allegations had resigned.

"To frustrate the trial proceedings, they [defence] are conspiring," he claimed.

The government reconstituted Tribunal-1 appointing Justice ATM Fazle Kabir as its chairman keeping Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim and Justice Anwarul Haque as its members.

Moudud, in the beginning of his submission, highlighted section 6 (6) of the act which clearly says the tribunal is not bound to reinitiate a trial.

According to 6 (6) of the act, "A tribunal shall not merely by reason of any change in its membership or the absence of any member thereof from any sitting, be bound to recall and re-hear

BCL men

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produced Shakil, Nahid and Shaon -- who are among the six students taken earlier on eight-day remand -- before Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Erfan Ullah yesterday.

Yesterday, a Dhaka court extended the remand of two of the students -- HM Kibria and Kaiyum Mia -- for three days. Another student who is on remand is Saiful Islam.

Four others -- Mamun-ur Rashid, Faruk Hossain, Mosleuddin Muslim and Nahiduzzaman Tuhin -- have been shown arrested in the murder case, although they have no criminal record.

The trio told the magistrate the president and general secretary were standing at a distance while they were beating up Bishwajit near the park, taking him for a pro-blockade supporter.

They named Kibria, Yunus, Mostafa and several others who took part in the killing, and added that Rajon, a fourth-year student, hacked Bishwajit with a machete-like weapon several times.

Talking to The Daily Star, an investigator preferring anonymity said they got some names who ordered the BCL cadres to go tough if pro-blockade men create anarchy.

The three students in their statements said they were involved with the pro-ruling party organisation, the officer added.

The Prime Minister's Office on Dec 13 claimed nobody from Chhatra League killed Bishwajit, although news photographers and videos already had made it clear who hacked the youth to death in broad daylight.

Investigation Officer of the case, Tajul Islam, quoted the three as saying more than 15 persons had attacked Bishwajit.

Another investigator, requesting anonymity, said, "We are trying to nab the rest of the attackers on the basis of these confessional statements."

any witness who has already given any evidence and may act on the evidence already given or produced before it."

But, Moudud told the tribunal, "You [the tribunal] are not bound to follow 6 (6) of the act."

The trial proceedings against war crimes accused Sayedee are complete and a verdict is awaited.

Questioning the rationale of the defence petition, Prosecutor Rana Dasgupta said, "They [defence] made the prayer over the so-called Skype conversation which was hacked."

He said the defence petition was based on the reports on the hacked conversation published illegally by Bangla daily Amar Desh recently.

"They made the petition based on the illegal activity, hacking, only to prolong the trial proceedings and the verdict delivery," he added.

The tribunal yesterday also deferred until January 10 delivering orders on two show-cause notices it had served upon defence counsels Tajul Islam, Mizanul Islam and Tanvir Ahmed Al-Amin in connection with "misconduct".

The tribunal also fixed today for hearing the submission of a petition filed by war crimes accused BNP leader Salaudun Quader Chowdhury for the removal of prosecutor Zaed Al Malum in connection with the alleged Skype conversation.

BNP threatens

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are now running the country. Hundreds of crores of taka has already been siphoned off. Incidents of disappearance of political activists are increasing day by day and the country has turned into a valley of death," BNP standing committee member Tariqul Islam told a protest rally in the capital's Nayapalton.

There was no example of any previous political government ever arresting a secretary general of a major political party, but the incumbent government has set the example by rounding up Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, he added. "On December 26, people will give the government a fitting reply."

The BNP leader urged the government to restore the caretaker government system and reiterated the threat to prevent any election in the country without a polls-time caretaker government.

Tariqul also blasted the government for the Hall-Mark and share market scams and "looting" about Tk 24,000 crore in the name of setting up quick rental power plants. "The government has to answer for all the corruption soon."

Addressing the rally, BNP standing committee member Goyeswar Chandra Roy said it has no alternative but to make the movement a success. "The government can file cases one after the other against us, but we won't go to the court. We won't compromise on our agitation and we must win at any cost."

BNP leaders Rafiqul Islam Mia, Abdul Moyeen Khan, Abdullah Al Noman, Zainul Abidin Farroque, Jamaat leaders Abdullah Muhammad Taher and Hamidur Rahman Azad MP, spoke, among others.

The Dhaka city unit of the BNP-led 18-party alliance organised the rally as part of its mass demonstration programme.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia during her mass contact in the capital on Wednesday will address at least five roadside rallies in different areas.

Egypt Central Bank governor resigns

AFP, Cairo

The governor of Egypt's Central Bank, Faruq El-Okda, resigned on Saturday, state television reported, after days of speculation that he would step down for health reasons.

State television reported that Okda, the bank's head since 2003, might be replaced by his deputy, Hisham Ramez. It did not say why he had stood down.

No evidence found against

Abul, Hasan

Says ACC chief about Padma graft

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Anti-Corruption Commission Chairman Gulam Rahman said nothing "specific" was found against former communications minister Syed Abul Hossain and former state minister for foreign affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury in the ACC inquiry into the Padma bridge graft allegation.

For this reason, even though their names had come up in the graft allegation, the two were not made accused in a case the ACC had filed on December 17 against seven people for conspiring to commit bribery, said Gulam.

The ACC chief made the observations when talking to newsmen after a meeting with government and other officials in the conference room of Habiganj deputy commissioner yesterday afternoon.

Gulam said the two will face trial like the seven people if substantial evidence against them is produced, adding, "None is above the law."

The commission's Sylhet Regional Director Major Akhtaruzzaman Khan, Habiganj Superintendent of Police Kamrul Amin and Habiganj Government Brindaban College Principal Bijit Kumar Bhattacharya, among others, spoke on the occasion.

Two killed in Ctg fire

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two teenage boys were killed last night in a fire at a market in Hathazari upazila in the port city.

The identity of the deceased aged between 12 and 15 could not be known immediately.

Five shops were also gutted in the blaze that broke out at a tea stall at around 10:00pm at Loharpul market, said Md Jasim Uddin, deputy assistant director of Hathazari fire station.

On information, fire fighters rushed to the spot and brought the fire under control by 11:15pm, he said.

3 Sonali

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Altaf Hossain and Shafiqul Islam of the bank's head office.

The arrestees were taken to Ramna Police Station at about 7:05pm, said Shah Alam, officer-in-charge of the police station.

Wishing anonymity, an ACC official said the three will be taken to the ACC's Segunbagicha office today morning, and then they will be produced before a Dhaka Court with remand prayers in the cases.

Of the 27 accused, the ACC has so far arrested four high officials of Sonali Bank and three high-ups of controversial Hall-Mark Group.

The other arrestees are AKM Azizur Rahman, ex-manager of Sonali Bank's Ruposhi Bangla Hotel branch, Tanvir Mahmud, managing director of Hall-Mark Group, his wife Jasmine Islam, also chairperson of the Group, and Tushar Ahmed, general manager of the company.

Following a two and a half months' probe, the ACC on October 4 filed 11 cases against the 27 officials under anti-money laundering and corruption prevention acts.

According to the probe findings, Hall-Mark took a loan of over Tk 1,568 crore from Sonali Bank's Ruposhi Bangla Hotel branch between October last year and May this year through forged inland bill purchase, fraudulently showing some of the Hall Mark officials as owners of various businesses.

In May, a Bangladesh Bank investigation revealed serious irregularities at the Sonali Bank branch in sanctioning and disbursing loans of Tk 3,547 crore. Of the amount, Hall-Mark Group took Tk 2,686 crore showing fake documents.

Illegal all the way

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Md Nurul Huda, chairman of Rajuk, the development regulatory authority of the capital city.

Rajuk more than two decades ago entrusted the Dhaka City Corporation -- now split into north and south -- with the responsibility of being the custodian of certain public facilities like parks, car park grounds and markets only in the interest of their maintenance.

The erstwhile Dhaka Improvement Trust and Rajuk developed those facilities on acquired land as part of township neighbourhoods.

The land belongs to Rajuk.

The Rajuk chairman said the city corporation did not own the land in Gulshan and Banani and its deals with the private realtors to construct the buildings were illegal.

For example, Huda said, Rajuk reclaimed an approximately 4-acre area of Gulshan central playground from the occupancy of a commercial amusement park in May this year following a Supreme Court verdict.

The DCC leased out the land to a private company.

Akhter Hussain Bhuiyan, a member of Rajuk board, said the corporation can neither sell the two properties in Gulshan and Banani nor share them with any private party as these were public facilities.

Moreover, the city corporation had disproportionately given developers the share of these properties compared to the standard fifty-fifty ratio, said sources in the real estate sector.

Under the deal, Borak was supposed to build a 14-storey Banani Super Market and Housing Complex on

the site of the existing market plot No 44 with an open car parking space in its front.

The developer will get 70 percent ownership of the total 2,53,265 square feet saleable floor area.

But later Borak started constructing the 30-storey building, as the city corporation endorsed its layout beyond the purview of the contract deed. The high-rise will occupy the existing 16-katha open car park ground.

United City Twin Tower Development Ltd along with Bashundhara City Development Ltd is building the 26-storey Gulshan Centre Point super market and housing complex on a 3.75-bigha plot at Gulshan-2 roundabout.

As per contract, United will get 75 percent of around 5,07,333 square feet saleable floor area, along with proportionate land ownership.

Amin Associate Overseas Ltd, another private developer, is expected to build the 20-storey City Trade Centre on a 7-bigha plot demolishing the present two-storey market in Gulshan-1 and existing large car park ground in front of it.

Under the contract, the developer will get 73 percent of the total saleable area.

Sheikh Abdul Mannan, another member of the Rajuk board, said the issue had been raised at an inter-ministerial meeting, the point being that only an authorised officer appointed by the housing and public works ministry could grant permission for the construction of a building as per Building Construction Act.

There is no legal scope under which the DCC chief engineer as an authorised officer could give approval for the construction of a

building, he said.

"But we could not take any effective legal action against the DCC high-rise buildings, as a government authority is involved with it," he added.

Development works in the capital are governed by the Building Construction Act, Town Improvement Act, Building Construction Rules, Bangladesh National Building Code and the master plan.

The housing ministry and Rajuk are custodians of these laws.

Urban experts have said all those regulatory, planning and safety laws have been violated in the case of the DCC high-rise buildings.

ASM Ismail, a retired chief architect of the government, said the DCC chief engineer in no way could give approval for the building construction.

Ismail was designated as the first authorised officer by the public works ministry to give approval for the construction of government buildings.

Brig Gen Ahsanul Haq Mian, chief engineer of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC), could not say how his predecessor had approved the layout of the 30-storey building though the contract was for a 14-storey one.

About the DCC's ownership of the land, he said, "I don't know [about it]."

Nazrul Islam, chief executive officer of DNCC, said he was also unable to say how the previous administration had embarked on the schemes.

On the land ownership, he said, "I do not know whether DCC has got the land ownership from Rajuk for the two high-rise schemes."



Sadia Akhter Pinky

Suicide

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at a Jatrabari school, hanged herself from a ceiling fan at her grandmother's residence around 4:00pm.

Family sources said Rony, 18, a miscreant from Dhalpur area in Jatrabari, had abducted Pinky on November 28. She was later rescued from Narayanganj.

Rony was arrested after Pinky's family filed a case against him and his family members with Jatrabari Police Station under the women and children repression prevention act.

He is now languishing in jail.

Pinky's grand mother Selina Begum told The Daily Star Rony's two sisters went to her residence at Manda yesterday afternoon, and threatened her.

Upset by their threats, she committed suicide. At that time, her grand mother was not at home, Pinky's father Babul Hossain said.

Golam Azam, a sub-inspector of the police station, said Pinky's father filed a case on December 2 mentioning that Rony had abducted Pinky from Dhalpur while she was on her way to school.

Following a tip-off, a team of police recovered Pinky from a house at Arahazar in Narayanganj on December 3, and arrested Rony from the spot, Azam said.

Pinky later gave a confessional statement before a Dhaka court, saying that Rony took her to his friend's home at Arahazar making false promises, and later kept her confined there.

Following her statement, police arrested Rony's sister Pakhi and produced Rony and Pakhi before the court on December 4. The court sent them to jail, police said.

Pakhi came out of jail after getting bail in the case. Last week, Pakhi intercepted one of Pinky's aunt while she was on the way to Dhalpur and threatened her to withdraw the case, Pinky's grand mother Selina told The Daily Star.

Locals said Rony and Pinky were students of class eight at the same school. Despite repeated attempts, Rony's family members could not be reached over the phone for their comments.

Pinky's body was sent to Dhaka Medical College morgue for an autopsy.

2 factions

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has brought the journalists together and the two unions were going to be united centring their murder.

Top journalist leaders took oath to be reunited, holding their hands high together during the hunger strike staged demanding trials for all the murders of journalists, including the murders of Sagar and Runi.

Talking to The Daily Star, president of the other BFUJ faction Ruhul Amin Gazi said, "Division among the journalists are damaging for the profession. If we remain united, it will be easy for us to realise our demands."

Working in union will help cut the incidents of killing and torture on newsmen, he added.

The journalist unions were split in 1992.

On February 11, Sagar, a news editor at private TV channel Maasranga, and Runi, a senior reporter at another TV station ATN Bangla, were found murdered in their rented flat in the capital's West Rajabazar.

Sibling rivalry causes

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children fight it out to avoid causing further psychological damage.

Tired parents may welcome this warning ahead of Christmas Day, when rows over presents and the remote control can heap more stress on those finding the extra washing up and difficult in-laws too much to bear.

A new study has claimed intervention by mothers and fathers can cause long-term emotional damage and found the best thing they can do is set clear household ground rules for their youngsters.

Nicole Campione-Barr, assistant professor of psychological science, at the University of Missouri, said: "Although parents may be inclined to step in as arbiters, previous research has found that parents' interventions into adolescent sibling conflict can be detrimental."

In concert with those

prior findings, we believe our research suggests that setting household rules such as 'knock before entering a sibling's room', can be the best means for parents to resolve disputes and avoid appearing to play favourites.

"A calendar of chores and defined time limits for turns with a video game can help reduce conflicts. However, if a parent notes that one child consistently gets the short end of the stick, action should be taken to ensure one child isn't being too subordinate."

A team at the US university studied 145 pairs of European and American, middle-class siblings in their early teens over a year. The participants were asked about the frequency and intensity of their disputes.

They found quarrels could be grouped into two categories - equality and fairness, such as whose turn it is to do the washing up, or invasion of personal space,

borrowing clothes without asking being a prime example.

The psychologists, whose findings are published in the Child Development journal, then looked at correlations between the teens' reported feelings of depression, anxiety and low self-esteem a year later.

Campione-Barr said: "Our results show that conflicts about violations of personal space and property are associated with greater anxiety and lower self-esteem one year later."

The results related to anxiety and self-esteem appeared to be more detrimental for some siblings than others.

Younger brothers with older brothers, and girls with brothers had more anxiety, while teens in mixed-gender sibling pairs had lower self-esteem.

The study also warns parents to respect teenagers' need for privacy.

AL softens on left-outs

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as the party has only one year in hand ahead of the next parliamentary elections. The party at this stage wants to adopt an inclusion policy, considering different aspects, they add.

The AL wants to avoid as many rebel candidates as possible in the next elections. The party believes if the reformist leaders are incorporated, the issue of rebel candidates can be properly handled with the senior leaders' intervention.

Besides, the AL high command has apparently forgiven the leaders who wanted to curb Sheikh Hasina's absolute power as the party chief during the past military-backed caretaker government. It engaged some of them in different organisational activities.

The insiders say a senior leader has long been persuading Hasina to take some of the senior reformists in the party.

A highly placed source says the party chief was misinformed about the activities of some reformist leaders by a neighbouring

country's intelligence in 2008 and early 2009. The AL chief later got proper information and took a soft line with them.

In the meantime, Hasina has talked with many of them and seemed to be satisfied enough to bring some of them back by expanding the present size of the ALCWC by creating new posts like special general secretary. Among those who would return, Saber might be given an important position, sources added.

A few senior leaders, however, think Tofail and Jalil have lesser possibility of coming back. Tofail's refusal to be a minister seriously disappointed the prime minister a few months ago, the insiders pointed out.

These senior leaders believe Jalil put the government in an embarrassing situation when he spoke about some crucial issues which he had been requested not to discuss publicly.

Many party leaders say the reformist leaders wanted to implement the "minus two formula" -- sending Hasina and Khaleda Zia into retirement

-- with the help of the military-backed caretaker government.

AL stalwarts Amu, late Abdur Razzaq, Tofail and Suranjit had made their personal reform proposals public instead of placing them in the party forum, which led Hasina to remove them from the central committee in the last council.

Until that party council, Amu, Razzaq, Tofail and Suranjit were members of the AL presidium, the highest policy making body. But then they were moved to the least functional AL advisory council with no say in party affairs.

It is widely believed by the AL rank and file that some mid-ranked leaders were with them.

AL Organising Secretary AFM Bahauddin Nasim told The Daily Star there was a possibility that a few of the leaders known as reformists would be brought back to the central committee.

Asked about the fate of the former reformist leaders, AL presidium member Matia Chowdhury, also agriculture minister, said they had not discussed the matter with the party chief yet.