

Hasina

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going to be elected president.

Hasina, also chief of the ruling Awami League, met Hamid a day after the Election Commission announced the schedule for the presidential election on April 29.

Highly placed sources said the premier discussed with Hamid who should be elected Speaker if he is elected president.

Some AL lawmakers also met Hamid later at his parliament office (Speaker's office) and sought to know about the discussion with the premier, one of them told this correspondent on condition of anonymity.

If Hasina picks Hamid as her party's presidential candidate, he has to file nomination papers on or before April 21 as per the election schedule.

If Hamid is elected president in the upcoming session of parliament, then a new Speaker will also be elected.

Following the death of President Zillur Rahman, the AL high command contemplates picking Hamid as presidential candidate, party sources said.

Amid such a situation, the premier met the acting president.

Frame charges against Mobarak

Prosecution urges war tribunal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The prosecution yesterday prayed to the International Crimes Tribunal-1 for framing charges against former Awami League leader Mobarak Hossain for committing crimes against humanity during the Liberation War.

Mentioning the five charges, including of genocide, brought against the suspect, prosecutor Syed Haidar Ali said they have enough witnesses and documents to prove the charges.

Mobarak had been the organising secretary of a union unit of AL in Akhaura of Brahmanbaria for 16 years. He was produced before the tribunal yesterday.

The prosecutor said during the war, 102 villagers of Tanmandail village were taken to a Pakistani army camp at gunpoint by Mobarak and other members of Razakar, an auxiliary force to Pakistani occupation army.

Of them, 33 were ordered to dig a hole in the ground. Later they were shot dead, added Haidar.

Mobarak and his accomplices grabbed Anandamayee Kalibari of Brahmanbaria and looted goods from the Hindus. They destroyed all the idols in Kalibari and set up a Razakar camp there. Mobarak was the commander of the camp.

In another incident, Ashu Ranjan Dev was detained and tortured at Anandamayee Kalibari Razakar camp. Ranjan was later shot dead on the bank of Kurulia canal, Haidar told the court.

Abdul Khalek, father of Khodeja Begum, was a pro-liberation Ansar member. He was abducted on his way to visit his ailing grandparents.

Khalek was tortured at Suhilpur Union Parishad Razakar Camp before Mobarak shot him dead at Bakailghat near the Titas river.

The prosecutor said the suspect was also involved in abduction and torture of three persons and killing of one in Shyampur and Kharampur villages of Brahmanbaria.

Defence counsel Ahsanul Haque Hena is likely to place his arguments today against prosecution's submission on charge framing.



A diver gets out of the Rangamati river at Goma ferry terminal in Barisal during a rescue mission after a bus plunged into the river while trying to board a ferry. *Inset*, onlookers through the shore.

PHOTO: STAR

Bus plunges into river

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Abul Bashar Talukdar, deputy director of marine safety of BIWTA Barisal station.

Hamza had left Barisal station around 6:00pm and it would take six to seven hours to reach the accident

spot, said Commander of the salvage vessel Ashraf Hossain.

Leader of the fire service team Abul Bashar said, "We are trying our best to find the missing passengers, but the salvage of the vehicle is not possible for us."

Shahidul Islam, deputy commissioner of Barisal, and other high officials of administration visited the spot.

Meanwhile, agitated people started staging demonstration, as there was no success in the rescue efforts.

Police of Barisal River Port and contingents of Bakerganj Police Station, Rapid Action Battalion and Armed Police Battalion have been deployed on both sides of the river to keep the situation under control.

18-party to call hartal

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country if the party's top leaders were not granted bail on their April 21 court day.

The meeting also decided to stage a huge showdown on Pahela Baishakh (Sunday) in the capital to counter Gonojagoron Manch's movement, meeting sources said.

These decisions were made in the nearly two-hour-long meeting of the

standing committee with opposition leader Khaleda Zia in the chair at her Gulshan office.

Khaleda is scheduled to sit with leaders of BNP-led 18-party opposition alliance tonight to finalise the decisions.

Meeting sources told The Daily Star that Khaleda was extremely unhappy as many BNP leaders, including BNP

acting secretary general and three standing committee members, have been sent to jail by courts on April 7.

She asked her party leaders to be prepared for "tackling any kind of situation in the days to come".

There was no formal press briefing after the standing committee meeting last night and the leaders refused to go on record.

Binod Bihari Chowdhury

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age 104, it is time once more to recall the singular contribution he made to the history of this subcontinent in some of the most stirring times in its history.

The veteran revolutionary passed away at 11:00pm yesterday at a Kolkata hospital.

Binod Bihari Chowdhury was our last remaining link to a decisive part of subcontinental history. The sadness is in knowing, though, that what he and his comrades did between the years 1930 and 1934 in terms of arousing a sense of patriotism in all of us who wished to put an end to British colonialism in India is a reality we have almost confined to the sidelines of truth.

There is all the talk about the vivisection of India along communal lines in 1947. You hear arguments to this day about the crude manner in which India was broken into two, about who must bear responsibility for the perpetration of that tragedy. There are, too, animated conversations on what Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose might have achieved had he not disappeared from our lives. And you hear people in Bangladesh and West Bengal reflect loudly on the rap on the knuckles fate gave us through the untimely death of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das in 1925.

It is only a handful of people who recall the Chittagong armoury raid to day in India and Bangladesh. Or you could suggest that the bright shining moment when Masterda Surjya Sen led his fellow revolutionaries into storming a powerful citadel of British imperialism on April 18, 1930 is an episode only students of history, at the academic level, sometimes refer to. But then, there was Binod Bihari Chowdhury to remind us of the seminal nature of that revolt against foreign rule.

He was barely twenty at the time, in the lofty companionship of Surjya Sen, of Preetilata Waddadar, Kalpana Dutta, Kalipada Chakrabarty, Ambika Chakrabarty, Makhan Ghoshal, Tarakeshwar Dastidar and so many others. These revolutionaries simultaneously raided the armoury, the police station

and the telegraph office. The degree to which they cast aside their individuality in favour of their patriotism came through when they proclaimed a revolutionary government for a free India that was to wage a guerrilla war over the next three years. Surjya Sen spoke for his comrades thus: "The great task of revolution in India has fallen on the Indian Republican Army. We in Chittagong have the honour to achieve the patriotic task of revolution for fulfilling the aspiration and urge of our nation."

You could argue that the uprising was not destined to last, as eventually it did not. Surjya Sen and his men went on the run once it became clear that their action had fizzled out. And yet it was a revolt that sent shock waves among the various tiers of the colonial government. Masterda was tracked down, along with Tarakeshwar Dastidar and the young Kalpana Dutta. Surjya Sen and Tarakeshwar Dastidar were tried and hanged and their bodies were thrown into the Bay of Bengal. Preetilata Waddadar, wounded in the attack on the European Club in Pahartali in 1932, took her own life rather than be captured by the British. Binod Chowdhury, whose neck was pierced by a bullet in the course of the armed action, was captured and sent off to imprisonment in distant Rajputana. He survived loneliness and brutality and was eventually to be witness to the departure of the British from India. It was freedom, yes, but not of the kind he and his comrades had envisaged in the 1930s.

Binod Bihari Chowdhury chose to remain in Pakistan when many of his religious community crossed over to India in the aftermath of partition. It was a dangerous time, for the dreams he and his fellow revolutionaries had shaped in 1930 had splintered and parochialism had taken over. But then came a new moment in 1971 when, with his fellow Bengalis in East Pakistan, Chowdhury threw in his lot with the struggle for Bangladesh's freedom. The emergence of a secular Bengali republic in that year rekindled his faith in the ability of a nation to wrest its

future out of its past.

In the final years of his life, Binod Bihari Chowdhury was witness to the rise and fall of politics, of dreams, in free Bangladesh. In a curious way, all this rise and fall in his expectations was but a mirror of the tortuous, boulder-strewn path history has traversed in our part of the world. It was a mirror Binod Bihari Chowdhury held forth in Ognijhora Dingulo, the memoirs through which he opened a new window to a study of the courage and conviction of the men and women who proclaimed a free India, however short-lived, in 1930.

Hollande vows to 'eradicate' global tax havens

AFP, Paris

French President Francois Hollande yesterday vowed to "eradicate" tax havens "in Europe and the world" as he pursued anti-corruption efforts in the wake of a tax-fraud scandal.

As part of the effort, Hollande said that French banks would be required to declare all of their subsidiaries around the world.

He also announced the creation of a special prosecutors' office to pursue corruption and tax-fraud cases, as well as a new government authority to monitor the assets and potential conflicts of interests of ministers, parliamentarians and other senior elected officials.

Hollande said there was "a need for a relentless battle against the excesses of money, greed and secret finance."

"Tax havens must be eradicated in Europe and the world because this is a condition of saving jobs," Hollande told a post-cabinet press conference.

"French banks will be required to every year make public the list of all their subsidiaries everywhere in the world, country by country," and will be required to "declare the nature of their activities," he said.

"I will not hesitate to consider any country that refuses to fully cooperate with France as a tax haven," he said.

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democratic, pluralist, secular and inclusive society.

"We shall not allow the clocks to be turned backwards on the fundamental tenets of our statecraft and harbour demands that stand in clear contravention of our constitutional principles and obligations," she said.

She was briefing diplomats at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel.

Dipu Moni said the Shahbagh movement has demonstrated how the youth of this country remains attached to the fundamental principles and rights enshrined in the constitution and how they continue to draw inspiration from the values that form the bedrock of our constitution.

Dipu in her statement gave details on the current situation, the Shahbagh movement, Jamaat-Shibir's violent campaign and the recent long march by Hefajat-e-Islam and its 13-point demand.

Referring to the 13-point demand, Dipu said the prime minister made it clear that her government would not tolerate any form of derogatory comments against Islam and its Prophet (SM).

The government has shut down certain blogs and law enforcers have so far arrested four bloggers and online activists based on allegation of their involvement in making such derogatory comments.

She said although Hefajat maintained that their demands were essentially non-political in nature, it was noticed on April 6 that the organisation's platform was used by representatives of certain political parties affiliated to the opposition.

She said it has been widely reported in the media how Hefajat leaders and others among them preached hatred against the government, terming the government a "government of atheists" and a "government against Islam".

There were calls to institute Sharia-based laws and governance in the country but there has been silence or muted response to the ongoing violence and atrocities being committed by Jamaat-Shibir, including their attacks on religious minorities.

If Hefajat had decided to dissociate itself from Jamaat-Shibir, it would have been expected that

they would make their position clear against undemocratic, anti-state and systematic political violence, which have nothing to do with basic norms and precepts of Islam.

She said the controversial nature of some of the Hefajat demands was disturbing.

Referring to the governmental achievements of women's empowerment, liberal education policy, cultural vibrancy and secular outlook, Dipu said, "We cannot afford to bow down to any pressure to undermine those achievements."

The foreign minister praised the Shahbagh movement and said, "We remain confident that the youth of this country would continue to reject all forms of bigotry, hatred and obscurantism that tend to pull us backward as a nation."

She hoped that Bangladesh's friends in the international community would also not expect the country to go in reverse.

She urged the international community to remain sensitised to exigencies of the government that might need legal actions against quarters responsible for the ongoing confrontation.

Examinees may miss global bus

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out ominous alarm bells.

Five days of hartal enforced in February led to the cancellation of the SSC exams scheduled for those days, and two HSC exams have already been cancelled due to shutdowns this month.

But as these exams are held locally, the government staggered the test, which is virtually impossible in case of the O-level and A-level exams, parents and teachers said.

They urged the political parties not to enforce hartals or blockades during the exams considering the valuable time of the students.

dents.

An O-level student of Dhanmondi Tutorial said he was preparing to take five exams this May and four in the next sitting, for which he would take classes after May.

"But if one or more of my May exams are cancelled, my load for the next sitting will increase a lot. Not only will I have to take classes and prepare for the new subjects, but also continue to do so for the old ones. That's a lot of money as well as time and effort," he added.

Students do not like to take the exams at night either like they did in the

past few years, thanks to hartals and other political unrests.

Several guardians said their kids would apply for admission to universities abroad for higher education in October. But they will miss the session if the exams are not over within the stipulated time.

"It involves huge expenses and it would be difficult for many guardians to bear the additional cost of coaching and other expenses," said Humaiyara Azmi, whose daughter is sitting for the O-level exam.

Meanwhile, English Medium School Students-Guardians Forum, in a

statement, requested all the political parties not to call hartals, blockades and long marches during the exams.

Officials of the British Council, however, said the exam boards always remained flexible for a certain period and they tried hard to arrange exams even amid volatile conditions.

The Council will inform the political parties about the exam schedule, said an official, preferring anonymity.

"But if nonstop hartals are enforced, there will be no option but to cancel the exam," he said, adding that a final decision in this regard would be made a few days before the exams.

S'pore firm to supply 50,000 MT wheat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cabinet committee on purchase yesterday approved procurement of 50,000 tonnes of wheat.

Olam International Ltd of Singapore, becoming the lowest bidder, won the contract to supply the bulk amount of wheat at a rate of \$311.45 per tonne.

The total cost of the consignment will be Tk 124.58 crore. The exchange rate of Bangladesh currency has been fixed at Tk 80 against per dollar.

The committee also approved another proposal for appointing contractor to install pipeline under Ashuganj-Bakhrabad Gas Transmission Project.

Castle Construction Co Ltd won the contract for Tk 77.22 crore.

2 held for anti-Islam comments

4 bloggers sent to jail

STAR REPORT

Two cousins were arrested and sent to jail in Sylhet yesterday, as one of them had allegedly posted on Facebook deprecating comment and a caricature hurting religious sentiment of Muslims while the other "liked" those.

Acting on a tip off, a joint team of detectives and Biswanath police arrested Bijoy Chanda, 21, student of Sylhet MC College, from the city's Subidbazar area and his cousin Partho Sarothi, 20, student of a private university, from Bairagibazar area.

With the duo's detention, the number of total arrestees in connection with hurting Islamic sentiment via social network rose to six.

Police had earlier arrested bloggers Subrata Adhikari Shuvo, Russel Parvez, Mashur Rahman Biplob and Asif Mohiuddin on similar grounds. A Dhaka court yesterday sent the four to jail on completion of their remand. The information gleaned from them is now being verified.

The government yesterday directed Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) to beef up monitoring on Facebook, especially on Basherella page and some other sites. It asked BTRC to block those if any offensive content is posted there.

Bijoy and Partho were arrested after Golam Shahid, a friend of Bijoy and resident of Goahari village under Biswanath Police Station, had filed a case under special power act, said Superintendent of Sylhet police Mohammad Shakhawat Hossain.

A source in the police said noticing the comment Shahid had informed some locals of the matter on Tuesday. The news spread fast and around 10:00 that night agitated locals brought out a procession demanding exemplary punishment to the cousins.

Meanwhile, Partho's mother Rita Rani Das has claimed that Bijoy made the derogatory comment on Facebook, but her son is innocent.

Govt to take

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Army personnel also dumped sand bags into the Meghna as river-bed scouring had left several piers of the bridges in danger.

The repair works would keep both the bridges on Dhaka-Chittagong highway safe for the next 10 years, said communications ministry officials.

Speaking at yesterday's function, Quader also said the construction work of three new bridges adjacent to the existing Meghna, Meghna-Gumti and Kanchpur bridges would start in October this year.

A Tk 9,000 crore deal has already been inked with Japan International Cooperation Agency to construct the bridges.

Army Chief General Iqbal Karim Bhuiyan, lawmaker Subid Ali Bhuiyan, Communications Secretary MAN Siddique, among others, attended the function.