

Hold talks now

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 Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, BNP's acting secretary general, said: "The BNP is ready to sit for a constructive dialogue to resolve the crisis over the polls-time government."
 Top AL leaders, however, said they thought foreign interference would not yield any positive result in the present situation.
 The party's acting general secretary Mahbul Alam Hanif said foreign countries and the UN had got the opportunity to interfere in "our domestic matters" because of the opposition.
 "Due to the opposition's role, the UN secretary general and different countries are sending letters to us, which is very unfortunate," he told a private television channel.
 He added that various countries could express their concerns on various matters but the AL did not believe in acting according to their advice.
 Hanif, also a special

assistant to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, said: "We believe we will be able to resolve our own problems."
 Party leaders Suranjit Sengupta and Mohammad Nasim echoed Hanif's view.
 After Ban Ki-moon's phone call, a number of AL leaders made similar comments.
 Hanif, however, welcomed Fakhrul's comment about placing the BNP's formula on the polls-time administration. "We will not hesitate to accept their [BNP's] proposal if it is in line with the constitution."
 At yesterday's cabinet meeting, Hasina did not share the content of Kerry's letter with her colleagues, meeting sources said.
 But the government would send a reply, a cabinet member told The Daily Star.
 "We will inform the US government about our stance on the election-time government, assuring them of a level playing field dur-

ing the polls and talks with the opposition," the minister said, requesting anonymity.
 Kerry's letters come at a time when foreign diplomats based in Dhaka are working informally to reduce the gap between the two parties and forge a consensus on the election-time government.
 On August 23, the UN secretary general phoned Hasina and Khaleda and urged them to hold talks for a peaceful resolution of the ongoing political crisis centring on the polls-time administration.
 Ban also said the UN wanted to see a free, fair and credible election in which all political parties would participate, sources said.
 However, no visible development took place in the last two weeks.
 Moreover, Hasina on September 2 said the general election would be held without dissolving parliament and the cabinet she leads.

Her announcement triggered a huge uproar. The BNP-led opposition alliance claimed that the prime minister's comment had shut the door on a peaceful solution.
 Kerry's letters came against this backdrop.
 Contacted, Kelly S McCarthy, spokesperson for the US embassy in Dhaka, said Kerry had sent letters to Hasina and Khaleda "encouraging them to engage in constructive dialogue to find a way forward towards free, fair and credible elections".
 Asked about the contents of the letter, BNP Vice-Chairman Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury said Kerry had asked all political parties to sit for a constructive dialogue for a peaceful and participatory election.
 Kerry also emphasised that the outcome of the dialogue should be acceptable to all for the sake of a free and fair election, he added.

BASIC Bank rejoinder

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 knows nothing about the ownership of these vessels, it claimed.
 The bank also said Mr Hye is an established businessman and has the capacity to procure and operate the vessels which he is possessing. He had been the Managing Director of BM Builders and BM Telecom (Agent of British Telecom) since long.
 "Mr Hye possesses adequate land property and 23 flats, of which, 16 have been sold out and sale proceeds have been utilised for expansion of business. Some of these flats were located in Old DOHS and were sold at very high price," read the rejoinder.
 The mentioned vessels are owned by a limited company named Eden Fisheries where there are four directors, including Hye. As per rules and regulations of Bangladesh Bank as well as Bank Company Act, there is no bar to a

chairman or a director of a bank owning businesses provided that the business is not connected with any interest or function of the bank concerned to which he/she is a director or chairman, it added.
 It further claims The Daily Star report links Hye with the operational activity and performance of BASIC Bank. BASIC Bank is totally a separate identity which has no relation with the business of Hye. But linking the name and business of Hye with operational performances of BASIC Bank seems "a personal attack against him and we are expressing our strong protest against it".
OUR REPLY
 The Daily Star published the report based on the findings from the sellers of the vessels and the deep-sea fishing industry. The correspondent talked to Eden Fisheries' present and ex-employees who also confirmed the purchase.

Sheikh Abdul Hye Bachchu in his own admission has stated that he now owns three vessels -- Crystal 1, Crystal 2 and Karnatori -- which The Daily Star has come to know he has procured in 2011 after he became the chairman of BASIC Bank. He also admits that as part of business expansion four vessels -- Silver Sea 1, Silum Chai 29 and two others are in the process to be purchased by him.
 The Daily Star has been confirmed by multiple sources, including one of his employees whom we cannot name, that he already owns Silver Sea 1 and Silum Chai 29. He has also purchased Peninsula 1, Peninsula 3 and Speed 2. This paper has recordings of the conversations with the sources.
 Such buying spree has created curiosity in the industry which The Daily Star has pointed out. We therefore stand by our

report.
 The Daily Star did not link Hye's buying of fishing vessels with the troubled BASIC Bank. The report was on his personal business. We just gave a picture of the bank where Hye, owner of Eden Fisheries, has been chairing the board of directors since 2009. Bangladesh Bank in an investigation revealed how the bank's board approved many sub-standard loans throwing the bank into great risk.
 About the business background of Hye, this newspaper tried for over one month to contact him to know about his business and get his comments on the findings. We did not find anything written (except for his name) in his profile on the BASIC Bank's website. When we failed to reach him in person and by phone, we faxed and emailed to BASIC Bank's headquarters seeking his response. Yet, he did not reply.

Mueen, Ashraf led the killing of intellectuals

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 said he was the chief accountant of Greenland Mercantile Company and was living in Shantibagh area in Dhaka during the Liberation War.
 In March, 1971, he had heated arguments with a non-Bengali director of his company, as the director had hurled abusive words at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Delwar suspects that the director, who was a retired air force officer, might have listed his name (to give it to the Pakistani army or their collaborators).
 Delwar said around 10:00am on December 14, 1971, six armed men in khaki (brown) and two in civil clothes had come to his house. An army officer in uniform was waiting a little far away.
 "After entering my house, three men in khaki pointed guns at me and the two men in civil clothes held me by my hands and took me to the

army officer," said Delwar, adding, "They [the two in civil clothes] addressed each other as brother and Mueen Uddin and Ashrafuzzaman."
 Delwar said following the instructions of the army man, the Al-Badr men had taken him near Malibagh intersection and then blindfolded him with his shirt and tied up his hands and put him into a microbus.
 On the way more people had been picked up in the vehicle, said the witness, adding that they had been brought to a place around 12:30pm and kept confined to a room on the first floor of a building.
 Delwar said a teenage boy, whose hands were free, untied Delwar's hands on his request. He (Delwar) then removed his blindfold.
 "The name of the boy was Tarek and he was a class-VIII student. He told me that it was

Mohammadpur Physical Training Institute, which had been turned into Al-Badr headquarters," said Delwar.
 "I saw many people on the floor there. Eyes of some people were gouged out while many others bore severe torture marks... the entire floor was flooded with blood. It was around 1:00pm by then," said emotion-choked Delwar.
 Later, Delwar again put on the blindfold softly on his eyes, so that he could see everything, and soaked his clothes and body with blood to fool the Al-Badr men.
 Around dusk, more people were brought in the room. Of them, one detainee had requested to free his hands, said Delwar.
 "I untied his hands and recognised the man. He was our teacher Munier Chowdhury," said Delwar, adding that he knew Prof Munier and Prof Mofazzal

Haidar Choudhury as he was also a Dhaka University (DU) student.
 As their relatives testified, DU professors Munier and Mofazzal were abducted by Al-Badr men on December 14, 1971.
 Delwar said around 8:30pm, two men entered into the room with lanterns and 10/12 men armed with iron rods followed them.
 "The duo went near Munier Chowdhury and said 'You have taught mantra to your university students all these days; now we will teach you some mantra,'" said Delwar.
 When they asked Munier Chowdhury whether he had written any book on Rabindranath Tagore, he replied in the negative.
 They asked the same question to Mofazzal and as he answered in the positive, the duo told their subordinates, "They [Munier and Mofazzal]

have to be executed as they are Indian spies."
 Then they started beating them up indiscriminately with iron rods, said Delwar in a soaked tone. They also hit Delwar with iron rod in the head and legs.
 Yesterday, Delwar showed the court the injury mark on his head.
 He said the men came once again to the room around 12:30am and boarded all the detainees in 20/22 buses and took them to a place. The place was Katusur in Mohammadpur (known as Rayerbazar Martyred Intellectuals' Memorial built after the independence).
 Delwar said the detainees had been bayoneted to death one after another near a beel. Some detainees, who were crying, were shot dead.
 "The killing spree continued until 4:00am of December 15, 1971. I saw it [the killing] as my blind-

fold was loose," he said, adding, "I also took mental preparation for death."
 At one point, Delwar heard screams of a woman, who was requesting to release her.
 "Don't kill me. You have mothers and sisters. What would you do if I were your mother or sister? I have a little kid; he will die, if you kill me," Delwar quoted the woman as saying.
 Asked by the killers, the woman identified her as journalist Selina Parvin, said Delwar.
 As per her son's testimony, Selina was abducted from her house on December 13, 1971.
 "Please release me. I will never come back to Dhaka. I won't write anything in newspaper," said Delwar quoting Selina. He added that they had killed her charging bayonets.
 In the meantime, one youth requested Ashrafuzzaman and

Mueen Uddin to save him but they did not pay heed to it and moved away, he said.
 "Getting this opportunity, I untied my hands and removed my blindfold and started running towards a river because I preferred to shot dead rather than being bayoneted," said Delwar.
 He said after seven to eight minutes, when the killers had discovered that a detainee (Delwar) was missing, they started firing in the dark, but he managed to flee by crossing the river.
 That morning of December 15, 1971, Delwar was rescued by two villagers of Basila. He claimed to the court yesterday that of all the detainees taken to Katusur (Rayerbazar), he was the only one to survive.
 On December 17, he returned to Dhaka and on December 19 Bangla daily Dainik Bangla published

his interview, said Delwar. Later, he gave many media interviews.
 The state-appointed defence also finished cross-examining Delwar yesterday.
 Delwar yesterday came to testify in taking permission from his doctor, as he has been undergoing treatment at a hospital from August 14. After his testimony he went back to the hospital.
 The tribunal led by Justice Obaidul Hassan adjourned the case proceedings until tomorrow.
 Prosecutor Sahidur Rahman said they would produce one of the two investigation officers of the case as their next witness.
 Meanwhile, the defence yesterday completed cross-examining of Tohurul Alam Mollah, the 20th prosecution witness, in the war crimes case against Motiur Rahman Nizami at the International Crimes Tribunal-1.

Assad warns US over strike

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 social media administration or government. We're the government that deals with evidence."
 Meanwhile, Russia yesterday warned military strikes on Syria risked causing an "outburst of terrorism" in the region at a time when the Damascus regime is still ready for talks to end the conflict.
 "All the more, politicians share our estimation that a military solution will lead to an outburst of terrorism both in Syria and in neighbouring countries," Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said after talks with Syrian counterpart Walid al-Muallem.
 Lavrov also warned strikes would create even more refugees and added Russia "cannot not be worried by the fate of Russians living in Syria whose health and life might

be put at risk."
 "The possibility for a political solution remains," Lavrov said, emphasising that his Syrian counterpart has assured him at the talks in Moscow that Damascus was still "ready for peace talks".
 In the interview broadcast Monday Assad said that his forces had themselves in fact been attacked by rebels using chemical arms.
 "But in the area where they say the government used chemical weapons, we only have video and we only have pictures and allegations. We're not there. Our forces, our police, our institutions don't think this," Assad said.
 Asked whether the repercussions he predicted could include the use of more chemical weapons, Assad replied: "That depends. If the rebels or

the terrorists in this region or any other group have it, it could happen. I don't know. I'm not a fortune teller to tell you what's going to happen."
 Meanwhile, Russian and Syrian foreign ministers say they will push for the return of United Nations inspectors to Syria to continue their probe into the use of chemical weapons, AP reported.
 Sergei Lavrov said after Monday's talks with his Syrian counterpart Walid al-Muallem that Moscow will continue to promote a peaceful settlement and may try to convene a gathering of all Syrian opposition figures who are interested in peaceful settlement.
 Reuters reported Syrian government forces launched an offensive to wrest back

control of an historic Christian town north of Damascus yesterday, activists said.
 In the past six days, the town of Maaloula has already changed hands three times between President Bashar al-Assad's forces and rebel groups, some of which are linked to al-Qaeda.
 Combatants say the intensity of fighting over the town is due to its strategic location near the road leading from Damascus to the central city of Homs.
 But fighting in an area with such religious symbolism could increase anxieties among the Christian minority, who have watched sectarian violence between majority Sunni Muslims and the Alawite minority overshadow the revolt against Assad's rule.

PM won't visit

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 the next general election, said sources in the cabinet.
 Party insiders said the premier preferred to stay at home due to the country's ongoing political uncertainty as well as the upcoming parliament session beginning on Thursday.
 Diplomatic sources, however, told The Daily Star that the decision of not going to the US is largely the result of a failure to arrange an invitation from the US government for a bilateral meeting with President Barack Obama.
 Although Hasina has visited the US four times only to attend the UNGA, her government has failed to arrange an invitation from the White House for a bilateral meeting.

Hasina briefly met with Obama at past UN sessions and a climate conference in US, but no bilateral meeting was held between them.
 Foreign ministry officials said though they got a hint of the cancellation of the premier's visit to the US, there was no instruction from the high ups till yesterday to stop arrangements for the tour.
 As per tour schedule, Hasina will reach New York on September 23 with a stopover in London.
 "Our preparations are going on...we are fixing schedules, appointments and accommodations, etc."
 "If the programme is cancelled, the government will have to pay compensation for various bookings relating to accommodation

and meetings," said a senior official of the ministry.
 Official sources said there had been desperate diplomatic moves and hectic lobbying to arrange a bilateral meeting at the Oval Office of the White House.
 But all efforts failed in spite of the existing bilateral diplomatic warmth.
 Diplomatic sources also said Dhaka's relations with Washington had lost some glow mainly over the issue of Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus and his Grameen Bank, Dhaka's poor handling of some human rights concerns and non-signing of the Tifca deal.
 Hasina's government has also cold shouldered some of the US officials during their visits to Bangladesh.

She did not find time to meet the visiting US assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asian Affairs Robert O Blake in December 2012, the sources added.
 US Ambassador to Bangladesh Dan W Mozena also did not get an appointment to call on the premier for a long time. Mozena finally succeeded in meeting her along with a visiting US Congressman recently.
 Relations with the US faced a serious setback after the Obama administration on June 27, 2013 suspended GSP privilege for not taking steps to afford internationally recognised worker rights to employees, especially engaged in the RMG sector.

Wakkas taken on 15-day remand

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 same incident and placed him on 15 days' remand in all the five cases.
 The detectives prayed for a 50-day remand for Wakkas in the five cases.
 They stated that Wakkas had made provocative speeches and instigated the Hefajat activists against the government on May 5. So, he

needs to be remanded to find out vital clues about the incident, said the DB police sources.
 The defence appealed to the court for cancellation of the remand prayer and sought bail for their client, saying that Wakkas had been suffering from different illness.
 Of the cases, three were

filed with Motijheel Police Station while two others with Paltan Police Station for killing Sub-Inspector Md Shahjahan, damaging and torching vehicles, and obstructing police personnel from discharging their duties.
 During the Hefajat's May 5 rally at Shapla Chattar, Wakkas threatened to oust the

government within that night.
 Before the rally, thousands of Hefajat men had set fire to shops, police outposts and vehicles in and around the area evening fell.
 Wakkas, superintendent of Madaninagar Madrasa in Jessore, was elected lawmaker as an independent candidate from Jessore-5 constituency in 1986.

BNP to unveil three models

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 will select five neutral and non-partisan dignitaries each for appointment as advisers.
 Another proposal says the AL will nominate five of its advisory council members and BNP chief Khaleda Zia will nominate five of her advisers to be appointed advisers.
 The other model suggests picking five ministers from the present cabinet led by Sheikh Hasina and another five from Khaleda Zia's past cabinet to be made advisers of the interim government.
 A BNP source said the party would demand three portfolios in the polls-time government -- home, local government and rural development, and foreign affairs -- for its nominated advisers.
 Asked, acting BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir confirmed the party's move to come up with the models of an interim

government.
 "We will present before the nation this month two or three proposals on the formation of an election-time interim government. Efforts are underway to this effect," Fakhrul said yesterday.
 He also said his party is going to make the proposals public in response to repeated calls from the government and the AL to put forward ideas, if it has any, on the formation of a polls-time government.
 Since the scrapping of the caretaker system in June 2011, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her colleagues in the cabinet and the ruling party have been urging the BNP to place its proposals regarding an interim administration.
 But the main opposition party refused to do so, saying its proposal would be rejected since the ruling party has an

overwhelming majority in parliament.
 Recently, the prime minister announced that the next general election would be held any day between October 27 and January 24 without dissolving the present parliament and the cabinet.
 The BNP bitterly criticised the announcement and vowed to resist any election as per the premier's announcement.
 This only worsened the political impasse centring on the next election, triggering fears of unrest in the coming days.
 Meanwhile, efforts by the international community, especially the UN chief, to resolve the impasse have raised hopes of a solution to the crisis.
 Against this backdrop, the BNP appears to have changed its stance and opted for drawing up proposals on a polls-

time government.
 The party, however, will not place the proposals in parliament. Instead, it will announce them through a press conference, a BNP source said.
 Besides, on an invitation from UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, a two-member BNP delegation is supposed to meet him in the middle of this month.
 On August 23, the UN chief called Hasina and Khaleda, urging them to sit for talks to resolve the political standoff.
 He asked Khaleda to send two of her party leaders to meet him during the UN General Assembly session in New York.
 Asked if the BNP team would place the three models to the UN chief when it met him, Fakhrul said the party policymakers would decide on this issue after consulting the chairperson.

Lobsters hold the key to eternal life!

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 older does not raise their chance of dying.
 An enzyme known as telomerase prevents the DNA in lobsters' cells from being damaged as they are replicated, scientist Simon Watt reports in The Sun.
 Every time cells in living creatures die and are replaced, the ends of the strands of DNA they contain

-- known as telomeres -- get shorter.
 The gradual erosion of the DNA in cells is thought to be the root cause ageing, as the DNA eventually becomes too badly damaged to perfectly copy cells.
 Telomerase prevents this DNA damage by repairing the telomeres, meaning that cells can perfectly replicate

again and again.
 Lobsters typically weigh one or two pounds, but in 2009 a lobster was caught off the coast of Maine, USA, that weighed 19lb -- a size that would have made it about 140 years old.
 Research into telomerase may yield ways of utilising the enzyme to increase our lifespan and prevent cancer.

Other animals can also use telomerase to ward off old age. Flatworms known as planarians use telomerase to repair their DNA strands and can regrow entire body parts.
 When cut in half their body can repair itself to form two new animals.
 The key to their success is that 20 per cent of their body is made from stem cells.