

# AL stays rigid

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government with elected representatives," he said.

Party leaders believe if the AL maintains this stance, it will boost the morale of its leaders and workers, and increase the chances of winning the next election.

The AL is paying little attention to the international community's calls for a consensus over an election-time government, said party insiders.

The Daily Star yesterday talked to AL policymakers and ministers to get their opinions on the UN secretary general's phone calls and the US secretary of state's letters to Hasina and opposition leader Khaleda Zia and also the European Union's calls for consensus.

Most of the ministers and leaders reacted negatively about the move by the international community. They alleged that the BNP was welcoming "the foreign initiatives" only to get their sympathy.

A few leaders claimed the sudden "foreign initiatives" to resolve the country's political impasse might be an outcome of the BNP's lobbying abroad.

"Intervention in any country's internal affairs by another nation is unfortunate and unwarranted," said

AL lawmaker Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury.

Communications Minister Obaidul Quader said any foreign mediation to resolve the ongoing political crisis would be humiliating for the nation.

Preferring anonymity, another minister said, "Foreigners will do their job and we will do ours. We will not allow any move to include unelected elements in the polls-time government."

It would not be possible for the government to move an inch from its current position for the continuation of democracy, said a senior AL policymaker, asking not to be named.

The ruling party leader, however, said the government would welcome any suggestions from the international community if they went with the country's constitution.

Khalid, also organising secretary of the AL, said that as in the past, any mediation by the international community would not yield any results.

"It is our problem and we will find the solution," he said.

The ruling party leader said if the BNP placed any proposal for bringing about changes to the electoral system, it would not be possible to implement them

as the process of holding the election had already got underway.

AL lawmaker Saber Hossain Chowdhury said, "The Awami League is committed to holding a free, fair, and participatory election, and our foreign friends also want the same. The party believes in constructive engagement as a means of achieving this within a constitutional framework."

Mentioning Hefajat-Islam's programme on May 5-6 in Motijheel, Hasina said the BNP claimed that several thousand people were killed during the law enforcement agencies' operation on that day.

Referring to the opposition leader's claim in Narsingdi rally that the law enforcement agencies fired more than 150,000 gunshots during the operation, the premier questioned whether it was possible in that short span of time.

She also said if this alliance comes to power, there will be no Islam in the country, there will be no azan, namaz and janaza in the country.

During her government's previous tenure, the alliance had propagated that a vast area of the country up to Feni would go under India, which was later proved false, Hasina observed.

# UN Study reveals rape crisis

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"We must change the culture that enables men to enact power and control over women."

The prevalence of rape varied widely between locations, the UN said, explaining that its sample areas were not representative of whole countries.

Using a definition of non-consensual, penetrative sex as a benchmark, the study said 11 percent of respondents reported having raped a woman who was not their partner.

This rose to nearly a quarter -- 24 percent -- when their partner was included in the question.

Of those men who said they had committed rape, just under half (45 percent) said they had raped more than one woman.

Alarmingly, of those who admitted rape, half were teenagers and 12 percent

were younger than 15-years-old, while the majority of men surveyed said they had not faced any legal consequences for their actions.

The highest prevalence (more than 62 percent) of rape was found in Bougainville, in Papua New Guinea, where a decade of war ravaged the island until 1998 and community justice is often favoured over legal process.

In the restive neighbouring Indonesian province of Papua the rates were at nearly 49 percent, while 26 percent of respondents in Jakarta admitted to the crime.

Rates in the one Chinese area surveyed reached 22 percent while those in Cambodia -- the most comprehensively studied with respondents drawn from five districts -- were at 20 percent, the report found.

The probe is not intended to be an authoritative statis-

tical overview of rape in these six countries or of the Asia-Pacific region, say the authors.

"Violence is pervasive but it is also preventable," according to report researcher Emma Fulu of Partners for Prevention.

"The factors we found associated with violence are changeable," she said, citing high rates of child abuse, recent conflicts shredding social structures and poor law enforcement.

In addition, men who had witnessed violence against their mothers or frequently paid for sex were more likely to continue the cycle of violence, she added.

To break the pattern young people should be engaged with issues "around what consent means... understanding sexuality and masculinity" within relationships, Fulu added.

# Hasina blames

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The people who got confused due to the propaganda of the BNP-Jamaat alliance have now realised that they were misguided by the opposition parties, the prime ministers said.

"The BNP-Jamaat alliance is very strong and efficient at spreading false propaganda. They spread false information against Awami League."

Mentioning Hefajat-Islam's programme on May 5-6 in Motijheel, Hasina said the BNP claimed that several thousand people were killed during the law enforcement agencies' operation on that day.

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During her government's previous tenure, the alliance had propagated that a vast area of the country up to Feni would go under India, which was later proved false, Hasina observed.

"Everything is the way it was," she said, adding that Awami League always worked for Islam.

The prime minister said she starts her day by offering Fazr prayers and reciting from the holy Quran. "I don't know in which hand Islam will be safe other than mine."

She noted that Awami League, which has given independence to the nation, always works for the welfare of people to bring a smile to their faces.

Describing her government's various development programmes implemented during the last four and a half years, the Awami League president said her government has made sure that quality education, health care and ICT services are on the doorstep of people.

In this regard, she mentioned that poverty has gone below 26 percent, per capita income risen to 1,044 US dollars, while the country's reserve already crossed the 16 billion-dollar mark.

The government has thereby given the country's economy a strong footing on the one hand, and has created huge employment opportunities and provided various social safety measures for the rural poor on the other, Hasina added.

About electricity generation, the Awami League chief said her government has increased the power generation capacity to about 9,000 MW while actual generation has risen to 6,675 MW.

Criticising the BNP-Jamaat alliance's previous government "that was involved in massive corruption and looting of money", she said the country could not achieve the desired development during their tenure.

The premier mentioned that the BNP chief whitened her black money by paying fines, whereas the present government brought back to the country money that was siphoned off by her son.

They had established military and carried out violence in the country, and the general people have not forgotten those heinous acts, she told the Barisal Bar leaders.

# Mugabe appoints new cabinet

AFP, Harare

Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe appointed a new cabinet Tuesday, retaining long-time allies and naming hardliner Emmerson Mnangagwa as justice minister.

Mnangagwa a key member of Mugabe's ZANU-PF party and long-time defence minister replaced Patrick Chinamasa at the justice ministry. Chinamasa becomes finance minister.

# No consensus

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Bangladesh that may hamper democracy and development, and cause sufferings to common people, according to some diplomats.

The United Nations, influential countries and donor agencies are unanimous in their view that the ruling and the opposition parties must engage in dialogue to resolve the crisis over an election-time government, they observed.

"As friends of Bangladesh, foreign countries and development partners want advancement of the country, but this time they might go for harsh decisions if their appeal goes unheeded by the political quarters," said a diplomat from an influential Asian country.

Several countries and agencies have already sent smaller but important teams to Bangladesh to get first-hand information about the pre-election situation.

A five-member European Union Election Exploratory

Mission is already in Dhaka on a fortnight-long visit to assess the feasibility of sending an Election Observation Mission for the next general election.

Foreign missions in Dhaka, said diplomats, are regularly sending reports to their respective headquarters about the pre-election atmosphere in Bangladesh, in which most of them expressed apprehension about a severe crisis ahead of the parliamentary polls.

A European diplomat, who asked not to be named, told this correspondent that his mission had received clear instructions from headquarters to convey to Dhaka the message that any unusual situation in Bangladesh was unwelcome, as they were accountable to their people, whose tax money constitutes the aid that comes here.

Recently, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon himself talked to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Leader of the Opposition Khaleda

Zia and urged them to enter into a dialogue to resolve the political crisis in order to ensure a free, fair, credible and participatory election.

Earlier in December last year and May this year, Ban Ki-moon sent Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, assistant secretary general for political affairs at the UN, to Dhaka apparently to create the ground for a dialogue between the two major parties for a smooth transfer of power.

US Secretary of State John Kerry on Sunday wrote to Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia urging the two leaders to engage in a constructive dialogue to find a way forward for a free, fair and credible election.

China, which hardly makes any political statement on the internal issues of another country, has also called on the two major political parties to open a dialogue to build confidence between them and resolve the current political standoff.

# Inu escapes attack

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The minister before the London office of the private television channel ATN Bangla.

Inu, president of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), went there to take part in a live talk show around 10:30pm (London time).

As the minister called them to take photographs with him, the youths approached him and tried to attack him, read the

release. Employees of ATN Bangla, its security guards and the protocol officer of the Bangladesh High Commission in London resisted the youths. At one stage, the attackers managed to flee the scene.

After the incident, Inu attended the talk show as usual.

On information, Bangladesh High Commissioner to the United Kingdom Mijarul

Quayes, press minister at the mission Rashed Chowdhury and a team of London Metropolitan Police visited the spot. Leaders of the UK Awami League and JSD also rushed there.

London police were trying to identify the duo from the video footage of the closed circuit television and arrest the youths.

Inu went to London on September 5 and is expected to return home tomorrow.

# Nizami was seen

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squatting down and removed the blindfolds. I recognised the body of Maulana Kasimuddin, head teacher of Pabna Zila School."

The witness said he even heard locals saying Nizami, president of the Islami Chhatra Sangha, had brought the Pakistani men

and killed the three Bengalis.

Yusuf asked some locals to bury the bodies with proper religious rites and left.

He went to India for training in warfare on June 15 that year and later returned to take part in the Liberation War.

Defence counsel Mizanul Islam cross-examined the

witness when he finished his deposition.

The proceedings of the case were adjourned until today.

Nizami, facing 16 war crimes charges for alleged involvement in crimes against humanity, was produced before the three-member tribunal led by Justice ATM Fazle Kabir.

# BGB-BSF meet

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Bangladeshi jail. It will also urge the Bangladesh government to act against Indian insurgent groups and destroy their hideouts in Bangladesh.

Ulfa general secretary Anup Chetia was detained in 1997. He has recently appealed the government to scrap the prayer he made seeking political asylum in Bangladesh.

In early August, the Indian authorities handed over their list of items on the agenda to Bangladesh to be discussed at the talks, according to a source in BGB.

India will also pressure Bangladesh to bring back several hundred Bangladeshi nationals who are languishing in

Indian jails even after the completion of their jail terms.

Preferring anonymity, a high official of the home ministry said BSF men were building structures in the undemarcated stretches of border areas, defying BGB's objections.

Regarding the deportation of Chetia, he said that though India had indirectly mentioned it in the agenda, the issue was a political one.

The ministry official also said there was no hideout of Indian insurgents inside Bangladesh territory at present.

Barad Hossain Chowdhury, Senior Assistant Secretary of the ministry, said that around two months back India sent

a list of some 2,333 Bangladeshi detainees who were in Indian jails after serving their jail terms.

Bringing back such people is a complex matter because Rohingyas try to identify themselves as Bangladeshi, said Additional Secretary of the ministry Shafiqul Islam.

According to the rights body Odhikar, as many as 98 Bangladeshi nationals were killed on the border in 2009. The figure was 74 in 2010, 31 in 2011 and 38 in 2012.

Declining to make any comment on the agenda of the talks, Director General Maj Gen Aziz Ahmed of BGB said the Indian delegation led by BSF DG Subhash Joshi would arrive in Dhaka on September 14 and leave on September 18.

# Four accused found guilty

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arguments for sentencing of the four would be held today. It was not clear when the four would be sentenced.

"I convict all of the accused," Khanna told a packed court room. "They have been found guilty of gang rape, unnatural offences, destruction of evidence... and for committing the murder of the helpless victim."

The four -- Mukesh Singh, Akshay Thakur, Pawan Gupta and Vinay Sharma, aged between 19 and 29 at the time of the crime -- had all pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The men -- a bus cleaner, gym instructor, fruit seller and an unemployed man -- were economic migrants living in or around a south Delhi slum who were drawn to the city to escape grinding rural poverty. Their faces were shown by the media for the first time yesterday.

The victim's parents, who wept in court as the verdict was announced, have led the calls for them to be hanged, saying that they would only find closure if the four are executed.

"She has got justice today. We are very happy," said the father of the 23-year-old trainee physiotherapist who was attacked on December 16. "We are very confident that all of them will be hanged."

Their 23-year-old daughter, who cannot be named for legal reasons, died of

grievous internal injuries on December 29 in a Singapore hospital after being lured on to the private bus following a cinema trip with a male companion.

After beating up the friend, the gang brutally assaulted her behind tinted windows for 45 minutes before flinging the bloodied and barely conscious couple from the vehicle on a road leading to the international airport.

Amid emotional and unruly scenes outside the courtroom as journalists fought each other for space, lawyers for three of the convicts said they would appeal the verdict while the fourth was considering his options.

AP Singh, the lawyer for Akshay Thakur and Vinay Sharma, called the verdict a "political conviction" and said they would appeal, which is likely to take years in India's notoriously slow legal system.

A juvenile has already been sentenced to three years in a correctional facility, while a fifth adult defendant, bus driver Ram Singh, was found hanging in his prison cell in March while awaiting trial.

The seven-month trial was held in a special fast-track court in south Delhi, with more than 100 witnesses called to give evidence, including 85 for the prosecution.

The attack sparked weeks of sometimes violent street protests across India with

seething public anger about sex crimes against women.

It also led to tougher laws being passed by parliament in March for sex offenders, including the death penalty for rapists whose victims die or are left in a vegetative state.

But savage attacks against women are still reported daily in India's newspapers and the gang rape of a photographer last month near an upmarket area of Mumbai rekindled public disgust.

"We have tens of thousands of rape cases pending and very few convictions, which doesn't send a strong message at all," said Ranjana Kumari, director of the non-profit Centre for Social Research.

During the trial, the prosecution produced DNA evidence, the victim's dying testimony and statements from the male companion.

In his written judgement, Khanna yesterday held that the facts "make all the accused liable for the cold-blooded murder" because the victim suffered internal injuries inflicted by their hands and an iron rod.

A small group of protesters stood outside the court as part of a campaign to push for the death penalty. Some wore black hoods and makeshift nooses, while one held a sign that read "We Want Rape-Free India".

India has the death sentence for the "rarest of rare crimes", but does not often carry out executions.

# No polls under Hasina-led govt

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held under a non-party administration, no matter how many tricks they [present government] resort to," she said.

Khaleda made the remarks at a view-exchange meeting last night at her Gulshan office in the capital to mark the 35th anniversary of BNP's women wing Jatiyatabadi Mohila Dal.

The country was now passing through a deep crisis, the BNP chief said, and asked the Mohila Dal leaders and activists to get ready to step up the movement against the government.

She alleged that this government has crippled the national economy by indulging in widespread corruption. "People want to get rid of this corrupt and repressive

regime," she said.

The former prime minister went on, "We have to create a congenial atmosphere for the next generation, and for taking the country forward."

BNP Vice Chairman Selima Rahman, Mohila Dal President Nuri Ara Saha and General Secretary Shirin Sultana, among others, were present.

# No allegation of tax evasion against Yunus

Says NBR chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The government has not said that Dr Muhammad Yunus has evaded tax, National Board of Revenue (NBR) Chairman Md Ghulam Hussain said yesterday.

"The NBR has detected some anomalies in bringing money home from abroad by Dr Yunus. Now it is the responsibility of Grameen Bank, as a public entity, to look into the matter and take action under the existing law if the irregularities were confirmed," he told journalists after attending the inauguration ceremony of the new office of Customs Bond Commissionerate, Chittagong.

"Any government official can bring money from abroad as wages. When Dr Yunus was the managing director of Grameen Bank, he brought around Tk50 crore from abroad and got a tax exemption of around Tk13 crore," added the NBR chief.

It was mandatory for Dr Yunus, as a government servant, to take prior permission for bringing the money home, he mentioned.

# Tension frays amid Berlusconi expulsion hearings

AFP, Rome

Tensions frayed in Italy on Tuesday as lawmakers ploughed ahead with hearings on whether Silvio Berlusconi should be expelled from parliament, amid warnings the fall-out could hurt the economy.

Attempts at a fragile truce between left and right in Italy's unstable coalition faltered as Berlusconi's People of Freedom (PDL) party lashed out at leftist lawmakers who are refusing to delay the talks.

"We are aghast at the Democratic Party's behaviour," vice-premier and Berlusconi protege Angelino Alfano said as a cross-party senate committee prepared to resume the hearings on Berlusconi's fate at 1800 GMT.

"For the sake of legally eliminating their historic political enemy, they are willing to bring a country to its knees," he added.

The hearings which began Monday aim to decide whether the former premier should be ousted following his definitive criminal conviction for tax fraud in August.

Berlusconi's allies want the hearings delayed pending a ruling on the validity of a new law aimed at cleaning up politics, threatening to bring down Prime Minister Enrico Letta's ruling coalition if the left refuses to agree.

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