

# Nizami fit

## Jail authorities submit report to tribunal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka Central Jail authorities yesterday submitted a health report of Jamaat-e-Islami chief Motiur Rahman Nizami to the registrar's office of International Crimes Tribunal, mentioning him as being "fit", the tribunal's deputy registrar has said.

"He is now in good health," Arunav Chakraborty, deputy registrar of the tribunal, told The Daily Star last night, citing the report.

Nizami's latest health report came nine days after the International Crimes Tribunal-1 deferred the long-awaited verdict "due to his illness".

The tribunal was scheduled to deliver the verdict on June 24, but earlier that day the prison authorities sent a report to the tribunal chairman Justice M Enayetur Rahim mentioning Nizami's illness.

The tribunal found it "irrational to deliver judgement in the absence of the accused."

Two days later, the jail authorities sent another report mentioning that "his health had improved slightly but yet to be stable", prolonging the delivery of the verdict.

Farman Ali, senior jail super of Dhaka Central Jail, told The Daily Star last night that Nizami was sent to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) for check-up yesterday.

Citing the references to the physicians of BSMMU and the jail, Farman Ali said, "His [Nizami's] physical condition is stable and well now."

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# An intersection

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to have a bus stop in the area, but in vain," he added.

Commuters come out on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in droves after offices recess at 3:30pm. Ten additional buses of Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) are supposed to ply the road to deal with the extra pressure of commuters during Ramadan.

A double-decker BRTC bus stopped at the roundabout around 4:00pm to take and set down passengers. The rest of the road was blocked by cars from Bashundhara City shopping mall, which would either go straight towards the Sonargaon hotel or turn to the right towards Banglamotor.

A traffic sergeant was watching the disorder nonchalantly until the traffic inspector and another sergeant came running from the other side of the road, drawing the former's attention to the situation.

The sergeant then removed a parked motorcycle from the road and approached a microbus parked on the wrong side of the road, only to be rebuked by the passenger, who claimed himself to be an ex-police official.

Later, the sergeant offered an apology and allowed the ex-cop's vehicle to cross to the other side.

Vehicles on the east-west route at the Sonargaon intersection have to wait for around 10 to 20 minutes to cross the area as VIPs' vehicles on the north-south route get priority.

The automatic traffic signal lights cannot be followed at the intersection due to the abnormal rush of

vehicles. Rather, traffic here is controlled manually, mentioned Khademul.

"As the north-south route is a VIP road, we have to keep it free from tailbacks to ensure easy movement of VIPs," he noted.

In the meantime, he received a wireless message to keep the road free for smooth passage of the communication minister's motorcade that would cross the area shortly.

Usually, 12 to 15 cops maintain traffic at the signal in a shift of eight hours. But during Ramadan, the enforcement has been boosted to 31, with twelve traffic constables, 12 ansars, five sergeants, a traffic inspector and a senior ASP of police.

Prof Shamsul Haque of civil engineering department at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) said as the pressure of vehicles is higher than the capacity of the Sonargaon intersection, a grade separation system (overpass or underpass) could be introduced there.

But since no additional land was kept along the road for its future expansion, there is no scope for implementing the grade separation system in the area, he added.

The roundabout there should be demolished and a traffic signaling system similar to that of the Gulshan-1 intersection should be introduced, suggested the Buet teacher.

He also recommended operating more public transport vehicles on the road instead of small vehicles to increase the operational capacity of the road by 10 percent.



Another photo of Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue shows the underpass is not so far from the Sonargaon intersection. Even so, people jaywalk to cross the intersection and obstruct the movement of vehicles. Thus the traffic congestion intensifies. The photo was taken around 2:00pm yesterday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

# Tk 134 crore vanishes

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by the Saudi government.

In July, Khalilur opened an account with Bangshal branch of Premier Bank to make transactions for the project. He received Tk 203.06 crore from the Saudi government through seven cheques.

Khalilur withdrew Tk 69.11 crore from the account, and kept the remaining Tk 133.95 crore deposited in his account.

He had no idea that terrible news would come his way.

When he asked his then Bangshal branch manager Shamsuddin Chowdhury in December to adjust his Tk 4.5 crore loans at the bank's Gulshan branch, Shamsuddin told him that his account had been closed and no money was there.

"The news came as a big shock to me. It was like a bolt out of the blue," Khalilur told this correspondent.

The manager informed Khalilur that he had withdrawn all the money through 388 cheques before asking for closure of the account.

Khalilur later found out that the bank's then vice chairman Haroon, additional managing director Abu Hanif Khan and Shamsuddin along with several others faked his signature and withdrew the money between October and November 2008.

He then took the issue to the bank's top management that held a series of meetings with the parties involved. But those meetings failed to yield any

result.

Khalilur then approached Bangladesh Bank, the finance ministry and the ACC.

The BB finally launched an investigation into Khalilur's allegations last year. It found that the Premier Bank disbursed the money though the signature of the account holder and those on the cheques didn't match.

"Bank officials were least bothered about the dissimilarity in signatures. They allowed the perpetrators to take the money, which was unacceptable," said a member of the probe team, asking not to be named.

Asked, Abu Hena Md Razi Hassan, deputy governor of the central bank, said they found some "elements of corruption" in this case, and referred it to the ACC for further investigation.

The ACC chairman said, "We are sure that bank officials were involved in the scam. But we cannot be sure about BH Haroon's involvement."

Asked about the mismatch in signatures, then Bangshal branch manager Shamsuddin said there could have been a "bit difference in signatures" on the cheques used to withdraw the money.

"The account holder took the money himself and closed his account," claimed Shamsuddin, who is now with the bank's Motijheel branch.

When told that there must be video footage of who took the money from the bank's Bangshal branch, he said, "Yes, there should be..."

Abu Hanif Khan, additional managing director of Premier Bank, said the bank's probe had found dissimilarity in signatures on some cheques.

"We have sent our findings to the central bank and the ACC," he said.

Hanif ruled out his involvement in the scam.

Asked whether the bank checked the video footage to know who withdrew the money, Hanif said he had no knowledge about it.

AL lawmaker Haroon rejected Khalilur's allegations against him, and claimed that Khalilur took loans from Premier Bank's Gulshan branch. As Khalilur failed to repay the loans, the bank declared him a defaulter.

"The bank now thinks of waiving his loans, considering his problems," said Haroon, now a director of the bank.

Khalilur claimed that Haroon stole his money and amassed huge wealth under his and family members' names. He said it was evident from the law-maker's wealth statements.

According to documents, Haroon invested Tk 6.62 lakh in capital markets and savings certificates in 2008. He used to earn Tk 30 lakh annually from rents and businesses, while his wife had no income.

Now, he and his wife have investments of more than Tk 15 crore in capital markets. He has about Tk 3 crore in cash, Tk 3.68 crore in fixed deposit and plots of land in Gazipur, Mirpur, Banani and Baridhara.

# Man killed trying to save kidnapped girl

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man was killed as he tried to save a college girl from the hands of her kidnappers in Uttara last night.

The dead is Md Liton, 40, of sector-4 in Uttara. He was a security guard working in a nearby house.

Nisharul Arif, deputy commissioner (Uttara Division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star that when the 17-year-old girl was returning home with her mother, some armed men on a private car intercepted their rickshaw around 11:15pm.

As locals rushed to the spot hearing the scream of the girl's mother, the kidnappers opened fire, hitting Liton in the stomach.

He was taken to Bangladesh Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead, Arif said.

The attackers took away the girl, he added.

Citing her mother, Arif said a boy from Kafrul on several occasions stalked the girl. The mother suspects that boy was behind the abduction.

Police were raiding different places in Uttara to rescue the girl and nab the culprits.

# Expressway project

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highway or ad-grade (on the ground) or both.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is funding the study and the design, which will take three years to complete.

Halfway through the designing, the joint venture firm will recommend a PPP investor for the mega project.

Mofizul Islam Raj Khan, chief engineer of Roads and Highways Department (RHD), and Gavin Harold Strid, representative of the venture, signed the agreement at the RHD office at Tejgaon in the capital.

Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation International of Australia, Oriental Consultants of Japan, Castalia Ltd of New Zealand and ACE Consultants of Bangladesh are the firms in the joint venture.

The first initiative to build a road with access control was taken in 2004, considering the fast growing number of traffic on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway, known as the economic lifeline of the country.

A detailed study between 2006 and 2008, which was also funded by the ADB, suggested building a four-lane expressway in the first phase and then expanding it to six lanes in the second phase.

It was then estimated that an elevated expressway would cost \$6.1 billion, but if built at ground level, it would cost \$2.2 billion.

In 2009, a year after the study was completed, a cabinet committee decided in principle to implement the project under PPP. The following year, the communications ministry floated a tender for construction of the expressway, but no one showed any interest. There has been no known progress in this regard since.

The daily average traffic on the highway was about 20,000 in 2004. It has now almost doubled and is likely to cross 70,000 when the expressway is expected to open in 2023, RHD officials said.

According to a study by the ADB, almost 90 percent of the country's total imports and exports are transported through the Dhaka-Chittagong highway.

Sixty percent of the vehicles plying the highway carry goods. It takes around 10 hours and sometimes more to cross the 250-kilometre distance.

The long, strenuous journey means a huge waste of fuel as well as working hours. Besides, shipments of goods are often delayed due to long queues of vehicles on the highway.

# Drug adulteration

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Manager Mizanur Rahman -- were present in court yesterday. The remaining three have been absconding since a case was filed against the company in 1992.

Until 1991, complaints were filed with the government relating to the death of as many as 76 children from acute renal failure after taking "Flammodol", paracetamol syrup produced by Adflame. The medicine was tested positive for deadly industrial chemical diethylene glycol.

While placing his arguments, lawyer Bashir claimed his clients' innocence.

Public Prosecutor Shaheen Ahmed Khan then sought the court's permission to place arguments on the next workday.

The court has already heard four prosecution witnesses, including the complainant of the case Abul Khair Chowdhury, the then superintendent of the drug administration, and recorded their statements.

There were three other brands found to have contained the same chemical, causing renal failure of children. The manufacturers were Polychem Laboratories Ltd, BCI (Bangladesh) Ltd and Rex Pharmaceutical.

An estimated 2,700 children reportedly died in unexplained circumstances of kidney failure between 1980 and 1992.

The Directorate of Drug Administration filed four cases against the pharmaceuticals following a national outcry. In 1994, the owners of the pharmaceuticals managed to have a stay order issued on the proceedings of the cases. Trial of all the cases remained suspended for 13 years following the orders.

In an investigation in 2009, The Daily Star found that though the HC stay order in the case against Adflame had been cancelled two years ago, the trial court was kept unaware of it.

# Kurds seek to split from Iraq

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ward," the MP, Farhad Sofi, said.

In his interview with the BBC, Barzani said the lightning advance of Sunni militants from the Islamic State (IS), formerly called the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (Isis), through the west of the country with the Shia prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki, left in control of Baghdad and the south, had reaffirmed the Kurdish goal of full independence.

"Iraq is effectively partitioned now; should we stay in this tragic situation that Iraq is living? Of course, we are all with our Arab and Sunni brothers together in this crisis, but that doesn't mean that we will abandon our goal," he said.

"I have said many times that independence is a natural right of the people of Kurdistan. All these developments reaffirm that."

The US has urged Barzani to stick with Baghdad, though the Kurdish leader said during a meeting last month with the US secretary of state, John Kerry, that it was "very difficult" to imagine Iraq staying together.

His call for preparations for a referendum came in the same week that Iraq's parliament was beset by walkouts when it met for the first time since elections in April. Sunni and Kurdish parties withdrew their MPs, ensuring the session collapsed, when Shia politicians refused to name their candidate to replace Maliki as prime minister before the Sunni and Kurdish MPs revealed their own nominations for speaker.

By convention in Iraq, the prime minister's position goes to the Shia, the speaker's position goes to the Sunnis, while the president goes to the Kurds.

The standoff underscored the deep

divisions that run through the fragile state's political class, which has been unable to find unity even as the insurgency poses an imminent threat to Iraq's stability.

Across nearly all of northern Iraq, the national flag is no longer flying. The Kurds have raised their own banner above all former central government buildings in Kirkuk, which their forces took as the Iraqi army fled from Isis two weeks ago. In Iraq's west, and some of its centre, Isis has commandeered all government buildings and at least three cities.

Baghdad is caught in a pincer movement between the Kurds and Isis, which have no interest in the state. The Kurds, who have long been cautious about their ambitions for sovereignty, are increasingly acting without restraint as central authority crumbles.

IS, meanwhile, has been taunting the Shia-majority central government with claims it is imposing a caliphate across a vast tract of land from Aleppo in Syria to Diyala, north-east of Baghdad. The announcement has no practical significance, but shows the potent rise of the jihadist group, and the impotence of Iraq's government in dealing with it.

Also in contention is the area around Kirkuk, which is held by Kurdish forces. Officially under direct federal control, the area has long been regarded as disputed, but Barzani has said the dispute is finished, meaning Kurdish control of the area would continue.

Maliki dismissed that assertion. "No one has the right to exploit the events that took place to impose a fait accompli, as happened in some of the actions of the Kurdistan region. This is rejected," he said on Wednesday.

# Span royals' worries mount

## Now, suspect accuses king's brother-in-law of graft

AFP, Madrid

A key suspect accused Spanish King Felipe VI's brother-in-law of embezzling public funds in testimony filed yesterday, the latest twist in a scandal that has embarrassed the monarchy.

Accountant Marco-Antonio Tejero, a fellow suspect in the fraud case against Inaki Urdangarin -- the husband of Felipe's sister, Princess Cristina -- offered the first direct testimony against him in a written declaration filed by the prosecutor.

The scandal, subject of a four-year investigation by a judge in Palma de Mallorca, soured the reign of former King Juan Carlos, who tearfully handed the crown to his son last month.

Felipe, 46, took the throne on June 19 promising an "honest and transparent" monarchy.

Now he has to deal with the scandal's fallout, including the threat of Cristina, 49, facing an unprecedented criminal trial on related tax fraud and money-laundering charges.

# Nahid asks TIB to prove its findings

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ministry, University Grants Commission and private universities are involved in illegal money transactions at different stages -- from getting approval to setting up the universities and appointing vice chancellors, provide chancellors and treasurers to awarding certificates to students.

"If you [TIB] can't prove it [the report], you'll have to withdraw it and apologise to the nation," Nahid said in a private members' resolution in parliament.

He lambasted TIB, terming its report misleading and baseless.

The minister claimed that the graft watchdog did not have any evidence in favour of the accusations but published the report just to put the government in an "uncomfortable situation" and to confuse people.

"TIB claimed that it had been investigating the matter for two years. But it hadn't come to us."

"The survey is motivated. All our procedures regarding giving approval to private universities are absolutely transparent and anybody can check it."

After assuming power in 2009, the Sheikh Hasina-led previous government had taken various measures to

root out anomalies in the operation of private universities, the education minister said, adding that the situation was much better now.

He said his ministry yesterday began investigating the allegations of TIB.

"I'll urge them to come up with evidence. If proved, we'll accept any punishment."

The minister's reaction is typical of reactions a section in positions of power give, TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman told The Daily Star.

"It is indeed yet another disappointing example of denial syndrome that in the end protects and promotes corrup-

tion."

The TIB official assured the minister of fullest cooperation to help him better understand the report with all facts, data and analysis.

TIB is glad that the government has taken the report seriously, he said.

"We urge the ministry to devote its energy to effectively addressing the allegations of irregularities and corruption rather than shooting the messenger."

The ministry would make a mistake if it considers TIB's report a criminal investigation. "It is a research report," Iftekharuzzaman added.