

Qamrul offers

FROM PAGE 1
after the CJ expressed dissatisfaction over "poor performance" of prosecutors and investigators of the International Crimes Tribunal in dealing with the war crimes case against Mir Quasem.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at a recent cabinet meeting slammed the two ministers, who were present at the meeting, for their comments and said she and her government would not own such comments.

On March 8, the nine-member apex court bench, headed by the chief justice, issued the contempt rule on the two ministers and asked them to explain by March 14 their "derogatory and highly contemptuous statements" and appear before it on March 15.

In the order, the court said the statements of the two ministers against the CJ were "flagrant interference in the administration of justice, questioning the independence of judiciary".

Such comments have "undermined the dignity, prestige, authority and impartiality of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh and the office of the chief justice in the estimation of the public at large," the SC mentioned.

The apex court on March 8 delivered its verdict on the appeal of Jamaat leader Mir Quasem, upholding his death penalty for committing crimes against humanity during the Liberation War.

Cyber heist

FROM PAGE 1
Gono Bhaban.

Hasina, also the AL president, said at the meeting that Muhith had met her and expressed anger over the heist, according to sources.

She also said evil attempts were made to tarnish the country's image by committing the heist at the BB.

Meanwhile, an AL leader yesterday publicly blasted BB Governor Atiur Rahman and demanded his resignation.

Addressing a programme marking the death anniversary of former AL general secretary Abdul Jalil, Presidium Member Nooh Ul Alam Lenin said the governor cannot sidestep his responsibility over the heist. "If he [Atiur] has self respect, he would quit his post."

Lenin also came down heavily on the governor in a Facebook post on Sunday. He wrote that Atiur should be removed from the governor's post over the reserve theft and "concealing of information".



The Queen Mother of Bhutan, Tshering Pem Wangchuck, is being greeted with a bouquet by Foreign Secretary (bilateral and consular) Mizanur Rahman at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

PM urges UK for cargo ban review

FROM PAGE 1
consider the request with utmost sincerity.

Hasina also mentioned that the Bangladesh authorities are strictly addressing the British observations regarding airport security.

In her four-paragraph letter, she requested Cameron to review the cargo ban decision, considering the historic relations between Bangladesh and the UK.

She mentioned that both the countries need to continue working together for taking the airport security system to international standards and that is their common goal.

Hasina also wrote that since her taking office, both the countries are working together against terrorism. And Bangladesh has teamed up with the UK and other foreign friends to remove security-related problems through various measures.

The prime minister confidently wrote to her British counterpart that her government's priority is to ensure a secure airway.

She said her government would continue to work with the UK and other friendly countries to ensure foolproof security at the Dhaka international airport.

SECRETARY REMOVED
Meanwhile, the government yesterday removed Khorshed Alam Chowdhury from the post of civil aviation and tourism secretary.

SM Golam Faruk, a member of the Planning Commission, has replaced Khorshed, according to a circular of the public administration ministry.

On Sunday, Air Vice-Marshal Ehsanul Gani Chowdhury was made chairman of Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (Caab). He has replaced Air Vice-Marshal M Sanaul Huq.

Officials at the civil aviation ministry said Khorshed and Sanaul have been removed as they failed to play due role in meeting the global security requirements of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

"The changes in the top two positions were made following intelligence report on the activities of the secretary and the Caab chairman since October last year when the issue of upgrading the security standards of Shahjalal airport came up," said an official wishing not to be named.

"The ban on [Dhaka-London] direct air cargo has a huge political impact and it has tarnished the country's image."

He also said Khorshed Alam, who has now been made a member of the Planning Commission, is supposed to retire in the next few months.

The moves came days after the UK Department for Transport imposed the air cargo ban.

"Recent security assessments of Dhaka International Airport found that some international security

requirements were not being met. As part of a set of interim measures, cargo will not be allowed on direct flights from Dhaka to the UK until further notice," the department said.

It added, "Airlines carrying cargo between Bangladesh and the UK on indirect routes are being asked to ensure it is re-screened before its final leg into the UK."

TWO FIRMS SHORT-LISTED
Meanwhile, the authorities have short-listed two foreign companies from a list of four suggested by British High Commissioner Alison Blake during a meeting on Sunday.

Through analytical study, the Caab primarily picked REDLINE and RESTRAIA. Two other companies are G4S and Westminster Security Services Ltd.

The job of the hired company will cover security management, quality control in civil aviation, Aviation Security (AVSEC) screeners training, infrastructural development and cargo security.

Group Capt (Retd) Alamgir, chief of the AVSEC Cell of Caab, has already contacted the companies to discuss the requirements and decide which one to choose, officials at the civil aviation ministry said.

"The authorities decided to appoint a firm from the list of the British High Commissioner because, despite several measures taken during the last few months since October last year, the UK

assessments continue to identify a number of weaknesses at Shahjalal International Airport where shortage of capable and trained manpower is a major issue," said an official.

After signing a contract with the Caab on March 24, the hired company will deploy its security personnel at the airport the very next day.

Asked for how long the company will be hired, the official said it could be for six months to one year. And asked how much it will charge, he said, "It will be fixed after the visit of the company officials. It will be a huge amount of money."

Led by Alison Blake, the British delegation during Sunday's meeting with the government suggested bringing in their trained operational staff for a short period to support security screening at the airport and arrange training for both operational and supervisory Bangladesh staff.

The meeting decided to select the foreign security firm by today or tomorrow and send a comprehensive proposal to the civil aviation ministry between March 17 and March 18 for approval.

Meanwhile, a steering committee formed on Sunday for proper supervision of the measures taken to upgrade the security standard of the airport sat at the ministry yesterday.

HC questions legality

FROM PAGE 1
Although the government has repeatedly denied that mobile companies are storing fingerprints of users, four of the five private operators admitted last week that they were indeed doing exactly that.

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission issued its first order in this regard on November 11, asking operators to collect subscribers' fingerprints and send it to the Central Biometric Verification Monitoring Platform (CBVMP) of the BTRC.

The CBVMP is a database where the regulator plans to store all subscriber information collected through operators. But the BTRC is yet to set it up, which is why the mobile operators are storing the biometric data in their systems, officials said.

This sparked widespread criticism, and the regulator issued another order asking the operators to stop storing the fingerprints.

Operators now say they have destroyed all the fingerprints they collected and stored, although there is no way for the subscribers to know it for sure.

Talking to The Daily Star, several mobile users said their information might get leaked from the operators' database and then be utilised for malicious use, such as leaving their fingerprints in a crime scene.

But a BTRC official said such an apprehension was misplaced, as the data would be stored in digital codes and the BTRC alone could decode it.

In her efforts to assure the public,

Tarana Halim, state minister for telecoms, said, "There is no scope to store users' fingerprints and if any operator does so, it will face tough consequences."

She added that the fingerprints could not be used for any other purposes.

Contacted, a top BTRC official said there were some "blind spots" in the original directive and that the operators could exploit that.

Supporting him, an executive of a mobile operator said there was no common design for re-registration and that was why two operators started storing users' fingerprints first and two others followed them.

"These operators thought they can use this fingerprint database for innovations and offer new products as well

like money transaction services using their phones," said the executive.

Both the officials requested anonymity citing office protocol.

There are some 13.11 crore active SIM cards of one government and five private operators -- Teletalk, Grameenphone, Robi, Banglalink, Airtel and Citycell.

As of February, the six operators have re-registered about three crore SIM cards, BTRC sources said.

'NEGATIVE PROPAGANDA'
After yesterday's HC rule, the telecom division said they would reply to the query and try to convince the court of the need for the biometric registration for the accurate identification of the mobile phone users.

"We are facing a negative propaganda about the issue and hope the

court will understand the situation after our reply," said Tarana Halim in her reaction.

The HC rule came following hearing of a writ petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer SM Enamul Huq on March 9.

The petition contends that collection of such private information of citizens by mobile companies is not safe, Enamul's lawyer Mucktadir Rahman told The Daily Star.

There is no specific data protection law in the country and so the private telephone operators must be restrained from collecting citizens' fingerprints until a sufficiently secure system is introduced to protect personal data, he added.

Thirteen officials, including secretaries to the law, home and post and

Mustafizur

FROM PAGE 1
team. And his rise has been noticed by the entire world.

With the entire Bangladesh team displaying an attacking brand of cricket, there are plenty of aspects that opponents these days tend to focus on while playing against them, but the most prominent among them has been the Mustafizur factor.

It's something that India and Sri Lanka pondered about during the Asia Cup and it's something that every side in the World Cup will have a special plan for.

The numbers he recorded in 2015 were phenomenal and that was the main reason why he was voted the best newcomer.

He played nine ODIs, scalped 27 wickets and finished with an average of 12.34. When it comes to bowlers having bowled at least 70 overs in 2015, his bowling average remains the best. These numbers were recorded against the likes of Pakistan, India and South Africa.

Mustafizur has begun his career with a bang. However, the best part about the calm-headed pacer is that he is continuing the good run. Bangladesh players are often guilty of fading away from international cricket after a short period of fame, but with the case of Mustafizur, at least for now, the scenario seems completely different.

The one thing that seems certain is that he never seems content. Just being able to bowl the odd cutter did not seem enough for him. And so he went on to learn another version of the slower delivery, the one that he uses frequently against left-handers.

To add to that, he has improved quite a bit in terms of swinging the ball and is also able to fire in yorkers when required. He is a skilled bowler who seems to understand the game well.

With a long road ahead, one only hopes that the left-hander's hunger to yearn for more remains.

Mustafizur wasn't the only one to be acknowledged. Tamim Iqbal and Soumya Sarkar were awarded the batting pair of the year under the openers category in ODIs. In 10 partnerships, Sarkar and Tamim put together 540 runs with three century stands at an average of 54. The impact that their partnership had on the team was the highest amongst all. In terms of numbers their partnership factor was 51.12 which was far better than the second highest pair of Brendon McCullum and Martin Guptill, who averaged 39.94.



Two indigenous men carrying a patient on foot at a remote para (village) in Bandarban's Thanchi upazila to take him to hospital. Locals are forced to take patients this way to hospitals, as no transport is available in the area. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: SANJOY KUMAR BARUA

Atiur faces heat

FROM PAGE 1
the cyber heist.

Meanwhile, the government decided to form a four-member committee to investigate the cyber theft that took place on February 4 midnight.

Mohammed Farashuddin, a former governor of the central bank, might be made the head of the probe body if he agrees to take the responsibility, said a finance ministry official.

A BB source said an emergency meeting of the BB board, which was scheduled for today, was postponed, as the finance minister would hold a meeting with the finance and banking secretaries -- both members of the BB board -- at 4:00pm today.

On Sunday, Banking Secretary M Aslam Alam told reporters that the BB board would hold an emergency meeting to discuss the issue and decide on the next course of action.

The same day, Muhith publicly vented his anger on the BB for keeping him in the dark for more than a month about the theft, and said he would take action against the BB.

"I am very unhappy about the handling of the matter by Bangladesh Bank... very incompetent," he said.

A number of ministers and Awami League leaders also slammed the BB

governor, saying he cannot shirk his responsibility.

Meanwhile, the newly appointed Chairman of the Anti-Corruption Commission, Iqbal Mahmud, said they are keeping a close watch on the ongoing investigations by law enforcement agencies and the BB into the reserve heist.

"The ACC is an independent commission. Wherever there is corruption, it will carry out a probe," he told reporters when asked whether the ACC would investigate the incident.

The Philippines' Anti-Money Laundering Council said it is preparing charges against a number of people allegedly involved in the illegal transfer of more than \$80 million from the BB account with the Federal Reserve Bank.

Besides, Securities and Exchange Commission Chairman Teresita Herbosa called on the Congress to further strengthen the country's Anti-Money Laundering Act, reported the Rappler, a news outlet in the Philippines.

Herbosa hoped the government would be able to recover the \$81 million that had been traced to Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation and three large casinos.

"I am sure somehow, some of it will be recovered. I am an optimistic

person and I believe in the rule of law," Herbosa said.

In a press release yesterday, the Transparency International Bangladesh expressed concern that the BB did not immediately inform its board and the government about the cyber theft.

IS returns to Iraqi town within 24 hrs

AFP, Baghdad

The Islamic State group yesterday returned to the desert town of Rutba in western Iraq, less than a day after vacating it, officials said.

The mayor of the remote town in Anbar province had warned when IS pulled out that the jihadist organisation may just be testing the population's allegiance.

"Daesh (IS) has re-established its control on the city of Rutba... which it had left the previous day," said a senior officer in the Jazeera Operations Command in charge of the area.

"Daesh came back from Al-Qaim with armoured vehicles and artillery," the officer said, speaking on condition of anonymity.