



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is welcomed to Marrakech of Morocco with a guard of honour yesterday after she reached there to join the United Nations Climate Change Conference. PHOTO: PID

Cases criminal, pleas political

FROM PAGE 1
Nasrin and Nazma appealed to the home ministry to withdraw the case saying the case was filed on political grounds.

These two are not alone. Many other high-profile ruling party men accused of murders, clashes and damaging government properties and facing lawsuits have appealed to the ministry on the same ground, that the cases were politically motivated.

They are now lobbying, with the help of influential leaders of their party, to get the cases withdrawn, said sources in the ministry.

In some instances, the "fugitives" themselves are visiting the ministry, said officials.

At present, at least 360 such cases are pending with the ministry. The appeals, filed after the ruling Awami League came to power for the second time in 2014, are now being examined.

After their win in 2009, the AL government decided in February next year to withdraw the politically motivated cases against the party leaders and activists that were filed during the BNP-led four-party government and later, during the two-years of the caretaker government.

Around 6,000 cases were later withdrawn starting with the cases against party chief Sheikh Hasina. But the incumbent Awami League-led government did not withdraw any such case filed after it came to power again through the January 5, 2014, polls.

Sources said ruling party leaders, ministers and lawmakers have been lobbying for withdrawal of such cases, thus putting the home ministry officials in an uncomfortable position.

The ministry in July this year formed a committee led by a joint secretary to handle the appeals.

The committee decided to send the appeals to the law ministry for its opinion on whether those have the grounds to be withdrawn.

Atiqul Huq, joint secretary of the ministry, who led the committee, told The Daily Star, "I had received some 132 applications around one-and-half-

months ago. Among those cases, many were not politically motivated. Even the law ministry rejected many applications."

He, however, could not say how many of the cases were political. "We can say that only after scrutinising the applications," he said.

A top official of the home ministry told The Daily Star that most of the appeals had no valid grounds for withdrawal. "But some cases had grounds and we will go for their withdrawal after proper scrutiny," he said.

Sources in the home ministry, however, said majority of the appeals had no links to politics.

Already a number of applications have been sent to the law ministry and the ministry turned down many of them. Opinions of the public prosecutors were being taken in some of the cases.

In the case against Nasrin and Nazma, the public prosecutor of Barisal, Giasuddin Babul opined that the case needs to be disposed of at the court.

The district magistrate and police commissioner of Barisal were of similar opinions, according to a home ministry document.

Talking to The Daily Star, Babul said the case had no political links.

"Moreover, there is no political connection with the accused and complainant," he said, adding, "I gave negative comments and suggested disposition of the case through the court."

When The Daily Star contacted Nasrin, she denied torturing Zesmeen Akter and said, "Zesmeen was sick for a long time and died 15 days after leaving her job in my home."

"I am a victim of conspiracy," Nasrin claimed.

Asked to explain the conspiracy, she said a leader of Barisal Krishak League, farmers' wing of the ruling party, in her area was running a smear campaign against her that the girl died from severe abuse.

"It was just to harass me politically and

socially." Elsewhere, in an incident of political violence, Sathkira District Matsyajibi Dal leader Amanullah Aman was hacked to death during a BNP rally at the District Shilpakala Academy on September 6, 2013.

A case was filed with the Sathkira Police Station.

One of the accused in the case is local Jubo League leader Mehedi Hossain and he has appealed for withdrawal of the case against him.

The home ministry sent the case to the law ministry for its opinion and just like the case against Nasrin, it was turned down, said sources.

This sensational case is now under trial with a Sathkira court.

When The Daily Star contacted Mehedi, he claimed that he was not involved in the murder and that he was in Saudi Arabia performing Umrah during that time.

He alleged that his business rivals had him implicated in the case.

In a case of workplace rowdiness, workers of the Crescent Jute Mills in Khalispur of Khulna Industrial Area ransacked the factory on July 22, 2014 demanding payment of their dues.

They also kept the factory officials locked up. Later, a top official of the factory, Gausul Azam, filed a case with Khalispur Police Station against the workers for damaging government property that carries a maximum punishment of life-term.

Three CBA leaders were fired in connection with the incident. They are Hemayetuddin Azadi, Ismail Hossain and Abul Kalam.

They appealed to the home ministry for withdrawal of the case. Local lawmaker and former minister Monnuzan Sufian has also recommended for them.

After the incident Monnuzan held several meetings with the factory authorities to get their terminations withdrawn.

The appeal for withdrawal of the case is pending with the home ministry.

Protect minorities or face action

FROM PAGE 1
the government in an uncomfortable situation," said a meeting source, quoting Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed as saying at the meeting held at the home ministry with Industries Minister Amir Hossain Amu in the chair.

The minister also mentioned that an attack on the minorities is a blow to Awami League's secular character, he said.

The committee asked the law enforcement agencies to stay on high alert to stop such incidents and take measures to protect the minorities.

LGRD Minister Khandker Mosharraf Hossain, Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu, Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, State Minister for Labour and Employment Mujibul Haque Chhunu and top officials of law enforcement agencies were at the meeting.

Sources said the meeting discussed the attacks on the minority community in Brahmanbaria's Nasirnagar on October 30.

At the meeting, Asaduzzaman admitted that police had failed to tackle the situation. He, however, at a programme at his ministry on November 3 claimed that there was no police failure in the Nasirnagar incident.

On October 30, a group of religious zealots carried out a synchronised attack on the Hindus in Nasirnagar upazila, vandalised around 100 homes and at least five temples and looted valuables from those places over a

Facebook post "hurting Muslims' sentiment". Before the attack, they attended rallies called by two Islamist groups -- Touhidi Janata and Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat.

Asaduzzaman also said the administration should not have given permission for the rallies.

The two-hour mayhem followed the Facebook post from the account of Rasraj Das, a local fisherman. Rasraj, 27, is now in jail in a case filed over the post. Before his arrest and the systematic attack, he claimed that he had nothing to do with the post, but apologised for it anyway.

Four more attacks happened in Nasirnagar despite the presence of members of law enforcement agencies.

After the Nasirnagar incident, over a dozen incidents of vandalising Hindu temples happened in different parts of the country.

At yesterday's meeting, Tofail said a vested quarter was trying to put the government into trouble before the next parliamentary polls and all will have to remain careful about this.

The meeting also directed law enforcement agencies to increase surveillance to contain criminal activities.

The meeting stressed the need for political initiatives alongside the administrative measures to stop repression of minorities, said meeting insiders.

The committee expressed dissatisfaction over law enforcement agencies as they are yet to arrest one Jahangir, a resident of Haripur in Nasirnagar who played a key role in instigating the

people. At the meeting, police claimed that Jahangir had links with Jamaat-Islami.

The meeting also expressed concern over recent rise of violence against children.

While briefing journalists, Amu alleged that a vested quarter carried out communal attacks across the country to embarrass the government after failing to carry out militant activities.

He said they were alert and those kinds of incidents would not be allowed to happen again.

The mastermind behind the Nasirnagar attack will be arrested, he added.

"There was an attempt to destabilise the country with militant attacks, but Bangladesh has made a turnaround from there, and the situation is now completely normal," the minister said, adding that foreigners have regained their confidence in the country and therefore, investments and exports have increased.

The minister also said for the last 62 years, the sugarcane field was owned by the Rangpur Sugar Mills authorities and a few land grabbers were using Santals to grab this land.

About the clash in Narsingdi that killed four people on Monday, the minister said followers of an incumbent chairman and a former chairman clashed over establishing supremacy, and those involved in the incident would be punished following an investigation.

Shipon freed after 17 yrs

FROM PAGE 16
Enayetur Rahim and Justice JBM Hassan granted Shipon bail until the case is settled.

The HC ordered the Dhaka Additional District Judge's Court for the settlement of the case within two months and directed the legal aid office of Dhaka to take necessary steps for submission of papers of his bail

without any cost.

The court also asked the Dhaka district administration for providing support to the victim's rehabilitation, if needed.

In 1994, a man was killed in a clash between two groups at Sutrapur in the capital. Victim's relatives filed a case where Shipon was made an accused.

Police arrested Shipon in 2000 and a court sent him to jail later. He was shifted to the Kashimpur jail on November 7 last year.

Recently, an investigative report on Shipon's sufferings was aired on a private television channel.

Later, Supreme Court lawyer Kuma Debol Dey sought the High Court's attention by submitting the report.

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