

Appointment of CJ likely tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The new chief justice is likely to be appointed by tomorrow as the post has been vacant since immediate past chief justice Surendra Kumar Sinha stepped down on November 10 last year.

Names of a few Appellate Division judges are being discussed for consideration, a reliable source in the law ministry told The Daily Star yesterday.

Contacted over phone, Law Minister Anisul Huq said President Abdul Hamid would appoint the new CJ very soon.

The president knew very well who would be the next chief justice and when the appointment would be made, he added.

Justice Md Abdul Wahhab Miah, the seniormost judge of the Appellate Division, has been performing the functions of the CJ since October 3 last year when Justice SK Sinha went on leave on health ground.

Justice Sinha, the 21st chief justice of the country, resigned amid flak from the ruling quarters over different issues, including cancellation of the 16th Amendment to the Constitution.

He left the country on October 13 last year.

Mother, daughter detained 11 years after 'abduction'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Police yesterday detained a mother and her daughter, who were allegedly abducted 11 years ago, in Isagura village of Barisal Sadar upazila.

A team of Criminal Investigation Department conducted a drive in the village and detained Josna Begum and her SSC examinee daughter Ziba Moni.

Meanwhile, Josna's husband Ahmad Ullah Munshi and his brother Shahid Munshi, who were accused in an abduction case, went missing from their village home in the same upazila after the filing of the case, said locals.

Md Fariduzzaman, inspector of Barisal CID, said Josna's brother Sarwar Hossain filed the abduction case with Kotwali Model Police Station against Ahmad and Shahid.

Mahabubur Rahman, sub-inspector of the police station, submitted the final report to the court accusing the two in the case.

On January 1, the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal in Barisal ordered the CID to investigate the case.

Following the court order, the CID team conducted the raid and detained the mother and her daughter yesterday.

Russians named

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Russian President Vladimir Putin said yesterday the release of US list was an unfriendly act, but Moscow did not currently plan to retaliate.

Speaking at meeting with election campaign officials in Moscow, Putin said it was "stupid" to treat Russian in the same way as North Korea and Iran, while also asking Moscow to help broker a peace deal on the Korean peninsula.

But the Russian leader said he still wanted to improve ties with the United States and would refrain from any immediate retaliation, reported Reuters.

"We were waiting for this list, and I will not hide it, we were ready to take retaliatory steps, serious ones, which would have reduced our relations to zero," Putin said.

"For now, we will refrain from these steps. But we will carefully watch how the situation develops."

Leading business figures in Moscow were reported to have been anxiously awaiting the report, dubbed the "Putin list." They feared that even if it did not impose further sanctions, it would have a chilling effect on their businesses.

But critics of the Trump administration in the US were furious that it did not take the opportunity to ratchet up measures on Russia.

WHY WAS THE LIST PUBLISHED?

The Trump administration was required to publish the list by the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAASTA), which was meant to punish Russia for its interference in the 2016 US election, as well as alleged human rights violations, the annexation of Crimea and ongoing military operations in eastern Ukraine.

It was supported by Democrats and Republicans who wanted to try and prevent President Trump from watering down US sanctions on Russia. The President described it as "seriously flawed" when he signed it into law in August.

Earlier Monday, the Trump administration declined to impose sanctions against companies and foreign countries doing business with black-listed Russian defense and intelligence entities, a consideration required by CAASTA.



Sandhya Eknaligoda, wife of missing cartoonist and columnist Prageeth Eknaligoda, holds a candle at the "Black January" vigil to commemorate what organisers said are the killing and abductions of Sri Lankan journalists who have disappeared during the month of January in the past years, in Colombo yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Missing BNP leader

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Ramna Hotel around 10:45pm. He went there to meet some local BNP leaders from Madaripur.

She also said a team of Rab-2 came to their Lalmatia house around 12:45pm yesterday and took away her husband's passport.

However, Lt Col Anwaruzzaman, commanding officer of Rab-2, said he was not aware of it.

When this correspondent visited Khokon's house in the afternoon, the security guard at the building, Ayub Ali, said around eight to 10 people, including three to four in Rab uniform, came to the house around 12:45pm.

"They were looking for his [Khokon's] wife," he added.

As Khokon's wife Azmery was not home at that time, they waited for her.

Azmery said when she returned home around 1:00pm, she saw a vehicle with Rab-2 sticker parked on the road near their apartment building.

"They wanted my husband's passport. When we asked the reason, they said they need to collect information."

She further said they told her that Khokon was in their custody but didn't give any details.

"It's a big relief for us that we now know his whereabouts," she added.

Seeking anonymity, one of Khokon's relatives alleged that the Rab men, who went to his house, asked the family members not to tell the media that they took away his passport.

"They wanted us to give a written undertaking that the family members themselves handed over the passport to the Rab."

When the family members wanted the same from the Rab men, one of them talked to someone over the phone. The Rab men then said they didn't need any undertaking and took away Khokon's passport, said the relative of the BNP leader.

Earlier in March 2015, Khokon, a former organising secretary of Chhatra Dal's central unit, went missing in the capital.

Around three months later, he was found in Faridpur.

At that time, the Rab claimed that it had arrested Khokon along with two others in front of a restaurant on the Dhaka-Khulna highway in Faridpur Sadar upazila.

Khokon's family, however, alleged that Rab members had picked him up from his house in the capital on March 5 that year -- an allegation refuted by the elite force.

Deadlock ends

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The high-ups of the customs authorities of India ordered the Petrapole customs station to continue with the old system of issuing car passes.

"We had an intense negotiation with the customs authorities of Petrapole so that the impasse comes to an end," says Probrir Mitra, general secretary of the Petrapole Importers and Exporters Association.

"The customs authorities of Petrapole Land Port met our demand. So, we resumed our export and import through the port," says Kartrik Chakrabarty, general secretary of Petrapole C&F Agents Staff Welfare Association of India.

Aminul Islam, director of Benapole Port Authority, said the perishable goods-laden trucks would be given priority in getting released from the port.

As of 8:00pm yesterday, 375 goods-laden trucks entered Benapole from India, while around 200 trucks entered Petrapole after the resumption of operations at the port, he added.

The strike took a heavy toll on businesses in both countries as nearly 11,000 goods-laden trucks had been stranded.

Bangladesh incurred a loss of Tk 12 crore as revenue every day due to the strike. In total, Bangladesh suffered a loss of around Tk 60 crore, said Maruful Islam, deputy commissioner of Benapole Customs House.

Of the total vehicles, around 600 trucks had been stranded on the Bangladesh side with goods like jute, jute goods and yarn. On the other hand, over 10,000 trucks had been stuck in Petrapole with goods like industrial raw materials, cotton, onion, garlic, food items, tyres and tubes, chemicals, garment items and spices.

The users of Petrapole port, who have been writing information in the forms of car pass seekers over the years, say if the customs officials do the task, it will be time-consuming as the land port users have already developed expertise in filling out the forms.

BNP activists snatch

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when the motorcade of party Chairperson Khaleda Zia was crossing the area on way to her Gulshan home from a court in Bakshibazar, said witnesses.

Around an hour ago, police detained the two BNP men after several hundred leaders and activists of the party gathered in the area. The two were kept in the prison van in nearby Kadamfoara area.

As the motorcade came, the BNP men brought out processions and started chanting slogans. Police stepped in to disperse them.

As the processions reached Kadamfoara area, the two in the van shouted for help. At this, the demonstrators hurled stones at the vehicle, smashing its rear mirror. They then broke the doors and freed the detainees, the witnesses said.

The BNP men also beat up the driver and two other policemen on the van and broke their rifles. The law enforcers left the place.

During the attack, the law enforcers appeared defensive.

Maruf Hossain Sorder, deputy commissioner (Ramna division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said three policemen sustained injuries.

Sixty nine demonstrators were detained and a case would be filed against the demonstrators on charge of attacking police, damaging the prison

van and snatching the two detainees, he said.

The identities of the two detainees could not be known immediately.

Wishing anonymity, a police official said on-duty law enforcers acted defensively during the attack as they had been instructed not to be rough with the BNP leaders and activists accompanying Khaleda. They were told if they swooped on the party men, Khaleda might lodge a complaint with the court saying she was being obstructed from making it to the court.

Yesterday, Khaleda was returning to her home after appearing before the court in connection with the Zia Charitable Trust graft case filed against her.

The incident took place hours after DMP Commissioner Asaduzzaman Miah warned of stern actions if anyone tried to create anarchy in the country.

He made the comment when a journalist asked him about the security measures to be taken centring the verdict in Zia Orphanage Trust graft case. The verdict will be delivered by the court in Bakshibazar on February 8.

"No one is above the law. If anyone tries to break the law and create anarchy by destroying public properties, the person will be punished," he said while visiting the Bangla Academy premises ahead of Amar Ekushey Book Fair starting tomorrow.

Journalistic

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people's right to express themselves after its passage in the Jatiya Sangsad.

They also feel duped by the government as Section 57 of the ICT Act was kept in the proposed law with some changes despite assurances in the past of scrapping the controversial provision.

Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed also came up with a similar statement, mentioning vagueness in the ICT Act and removing the vagueness in the newly approved draft law.

"I don't think action will be taken under the proposed law against anyone for true reporting," he said while addressing journalists at the Secretariat yesterday.

On many journalists' belief that the proposed law will stand against the freedom of journalism, he said, "I do not think so. We cannot stop you. Enacting this law cannot stop you."

He said many things were being written even against elected representatives. Without naming the lawmaker, Tofail said there was a report on an MP's character. "Elected representatives are also respectable, but the way the report has been framed... we all made mistakes."

He added political opponents in the opposition or even within Awami League might give misleading information to demean the running MPs and get party nomination.

In reply to a question that corruption took place in many government and non-government offices and journalists need to do spying and take digital record for investigative reports, the minister said journalists should keep writing their own way but write the truth.

ASK CONCERNED

Rights body Ain o Salish Kendra yesterday expressed concern over the approval of the draft of Digital Security Act-2018 keeping provisions similar to section 57 of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act, said a press release.

Section 57 of the ICT Act had no appropriate explanation about defamation, hurting religious sentiments and causing deterioration of law and order, creating scope for misuse of the act and harassment of people which is tantamount to obstructing freedom of expression, it said.

Although section 57 has been scrapped, the sections 25, 28, 29, and 31 of the proposed Digital Security Act contain elements similar to the section 57, it said.

Besides, section 32 of the act will shrink the scope for work of journalists and writers, the ASK added.

The rights organisation has also demanded steps from the government to bring necessary amendment to the act before passing it and urged the government to be more responsible to ensure people's rights to freedom of expression.

Banks asked

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banks that indulge in excessive lending beyond the limit," he said.

The private sector credit growth target for the second half of the fiscal year is 16.8 percent.

UK worse off under any Brexit scenario

Says report as House of Lords to decide on EU exit bill

AFF, London

Britain's House of Lords begins scrutiny of a key piece of Brexit legislation yesterday, as a leaked government report said Britain would be worse off whatever deal it strikes with the EU.

Almost 200 peers have requested to speak during the two-day debate on the EU (Withdrawal) Bill, many of them likely to be critical of its provisions to smooth Britain's exit from the European Union, threatening another headache for Prime Minister Theresa May as she battles criticism from her own party.

Tests await Tigers

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lead the Tigers' return to the longest format of the game in a positive manner after the disastrous tour of South Africa in September-October last year.

It will also be Bangladesh's first return to the venue where they faced the music of Australia off-spinner Nathan Lyon, who picked 13 wickets in the second Test to hand the hosts a seven-wicket defeat and deny them the achievement of beating Australia in a Test series. This time, the threat is of a similar calibre in the form of Sri Lanka left-arm spinner Rangana Herath, who is returning from injury and has a a devastating record of 41 wickets in just eight Tests against Bangladesh.

And in the absence of the experienced Shakib, it will be important for the likes of Mahmudullah, Mushfiqur Rahim and Tamim Iqbal to lead the charge and come up with an attacking approach rather than retreating into a defensive mindset.

The biggest source of confidence for Bangladesh will be that in their last Test against the Lankans in Colombo in March 2017, they came out on top in the country's 100th Test, which levelled the two-match series 1-1.

There is a lot of curiosity and confusion over the playing 11, occasioned by the unusual inclusion of six spinners in the squad. Keeping the nature of the pitch in mind, which is likely to help the spinners from the first session, the Bangladesh think tank is likely to opt for only one pacer in the form of Mustafizur Rahman, according to sources close to the team.

Contrasts in political

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"We are launching our campaign for the next general elections from here [Sylhet]. I seek your vote for boat [AL's electoral symbol] for the elections to be held in December," she said.

Khaleda left her Gulshan house around 11:00am for a makeshift special court set up in Old Dhaka's Bakshibazar.

The court is currently hearing the Zia Charitable Trust case.

In her deposition, the BNP chief said the case was filed with the ill motive to minus her from politics and disqualify her from contesting the next parliamentary elections.

"Activities of the government high-ups, their initiatives and statements in this regard have made it clear. That is why people have serious doubt if there will be justice in the cases filed against me," Khaleda told the court.

After over three hours in court, Khaleda, also a former prime minister, started returning to Gulshan around 3:30pm.

While she was on the way back, Hasina was delivering her speech at a crowded rally at Sylhet Government Alia Madrasa playground.

The prime minister will have another busy day today, attending four official programmes. At night, she will preside over a meeting of the AL Parliamentary Board to pick the party candidate for the presidential elections slated for February 18.

Khaleda, who is facing 32 cases, will begin her day today by showing up at the court for the trial in the Zia Charitable Trust graft case. She is scheduled to do the same tomorrow.

February 8 is now a much-talked-about date in political arena. The special court is scheduled to deliver its verdict in Zia Orphanage Trust graft

Left-arm spinner Taijul Islam and off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz will be among the three spinners in the playing 11 and the team management will have to decide at the last minute whether the last spot will be given to another left-arm spinner in Sunzamul or leg-spinning all-rounder Tanbir.

Bangladesh are likely to go with seven batsmen, with Imrul Kayes all set to open the innings with Tamim, while Mominul Haque is expected to bat at number three. Mushfiqur Rahim is expected to play only as a batsman in the Test side for the first time since 2006 and will bat at number four while Liton Das will take the gloves and is expected to come in after Mahmudullah at number six.

Mosaddek Hossain, who was out of the side since the Champions Trophy in June last year due to an eye problem, is all set to return to the Test side to strengthen the lower-middle order.

Sri Lanka, on the other hand, will once again come up with something different under head coach Chandika Hathurusingha and the visitors will be oozing confidence after their tri-series win.

And a well-fought three-match series in India which Sri Lanka lost 0-1 will also boost confidence and Dinesh Chandimal's leadership ability along with his fine form will be crucial. Dhananjaya de Silva, who smashed a brilliant hundred against India, will take charge in the batting department in the absence of the injured Angelo Mathews.

case that day. And Khaleda has to appear before it to hear the verdict.

The same day, Hasina is scheduled to visit Barisal to inaugurate several development projects. She will also address a rally to be organised by her party as part of her election campaign.

These activities and schedules of the two top leaders speak a lot about the current focus of the AL and BNP.

According to AL insiders, Hasina will visit Gazipur, Rajshahi and Khulna by July. During the tour, she will lay foundation stones of different projects as well as address party rallies, highlighting her government's success to drum up people's support.

She will make these visits also keeping in mind the city corporation polls in Gazipur, Rajshahi, Barisal, Sylhet and Khulna, likely to be held in the middle of this year.

Teams formed by AL central leaders have started countrywide tours to strengthen the party and present the government's success stories before the voters.

The BNP has put all its attention on finding ways to deal with the February 8 verdict as the party fears Khaleda might be convicted to keep her out of the elections.

Leaders of the party and its allies have already held a number of meetings to discuss the next course of action.

The BNP briefed foreign diplomats yesterday about the "weaknesses" of the graft cases against Khaleda and conveyed its concern about the "government's eagerness" to convict Khaleda.

To listen to the grassroots voices, Khaleda has convened the BNP's national executive committee meeting on February 3 to discuss the party's strategy.

Gayeshwar Roy arrested

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Asaduzzaman Mia.

BNP activists also snatched firearms from two policemen and dismantled them during the attack that left seven cops wounded, he told The Daily Star.

"We arrested him [Gayeshwar] after getting specific evidence that he gave instructions for attacking policemen," the said DMP chief.

Abdus Salam Azad, BNP's assistant organising secretary, said a police vehicle stopped Goyeshwar's microbus and detained him when he was returning home from party chief Khaleda Zia's Gulshan office.

In an instant media briefing at the party's Nayapaltan office, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi condemned his arrest and demanded his immediate release.

Gayeshwar is one of the few BNP leaders vocal against the government. After a Dhaka court set February 8 for pronouncing verdict in a corruption case against Khaleda, he called on BNP men to protest the trial.

He also warned of a tougher movement in case Khaleda is convicted "wrongly".

Meanwhile, plainclothes policemen picked up BNP's Assistant Organising Secretary Aninda Islam Amit from his Shantinagar house around midnight, said Shamsuddin Didar, an official of Khaleda's press wing.

Amit's father Tariqul Islam is a BNP Standing Committee member.

Contacted, a number of sources in the DB said they were not aware of his arrest.

Bari Babus in the capital's Eskaton.

Police also took away the CCTV set from his house, they claimed.

But local police and sources in the DB said they knew nothing about this incident either.

Earlier on Monday night, Rab picked up Anisur Rahman Talukder Khokon, mass education affairs assistant secretary of BNP's executive committee, from Ramna area. Rab admitted arresting him yesterday on charges of plotting subversive activities but did not say from where he was arrested.

DU expels 15

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geography and environment science, Mohiuddin Rana of physics, Abdullah Al Mamun of applied chemistry and chemical engineering were members of the digital fraud gang.

Mohiuddin is an assistant secretary of BCL while Abdullah is the theatre and debate affairs secretary of Amar Ekushey Hall Chhatra League.

The 12 other expelled students are Nahid Iftekhar of political science, Md Bayezid of psychology, Md Azizul Hakim of world religion and culture, Prosenjit Das of Sanskrit, Fardin Ahmed Sabbir of the Institute of Health Economics, Tanveer Ahmed Mollick of economics, Rifat Hossain of political science, Rafsan Karim of Islamic studies, Akhiner Rahman Anik of Bangla, TM Tanveer Hossain of history, Munshi Mohammad Sujaur Rahman of Institute of Education and Research, and Nazmul Hasan Naeem of Pali and Buddhist studies.

All of them got enrolled into the university in the 2016-2017 academic session.