

# Police foil Zia Parishad discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday foiled a discussion organised in the city for BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's release. Organised by Zia parishad, a pro-BNP forum, the discussion was scheduled to be held at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh around 11:00am.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir among other party leaders and activists were not allowed to enter the venue after policemen told them that no programmes were to be held there yesterday.

This is an example of a lack of "minimum space" for democratic practices in the country under the present government, Fakhru later told journalists at the venue.

The discussion programme was arranged by an organisation of intellectual people, he said.

Meanwhile at another programme at the Jatiya Press Club, BNP Standing Committee Member Moudud Ahmed urged the government to accept students' demand for reformation of the quota system in civil service in order to "restore normalcy in the country's educational institutions".

"Please uphold the prime minister's announcement [regarding abolishing the quota system]. Otherwise, people will take up the matter in their hands to realise their demand," Moudud said.

On July 12, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told parliament that it is not possible to reform freedom fighter quota in government jobs as there is a High Court verdict upholding it.

Earlier on April 11, the premier had announced in the House that the quota system would be scrapped. Moudud also criticised the PM as she took a reverse turn from her stance on the issue and called on the premier to take an initiative to ensure unconditional release of all the quota reform activists from jail and to stop repression on them.

"The countrymen will not remain isolated from the quota reformists. They will join them for a tough movement collectively to force the government to uphold the prime minister's announcement," Moudud warned.

In his speech Moudud held the government responsible for prolonging Khaleda Zia's imprisonment and said his party will go for a planned movement at an "appropriate time to oust this autocratic ruler".

The BNP leader once again stated that his party will not participate in the upcoming general election with Khaleda in jail.

# Clarify

FROM PAGE 16

The students, mostly studying in the US, said the repression on quota reformists was creating a negative impression of Bangladesh and its universities abroad.

At yesterday's discussion, the participants said the quota reformists were arrested in different cases, including for vandalising the residence of Dhaka University vice-chancellor, setting fire to woods and bamboos of Mangal Shobhajatra ahead of Pahela Baishakh celebrations and blocking public transport. They were also accused under the section 57 of the Information and Communication Technology Act.

The cases were filed at different times, accusing hundreds of unnamed persons, said lawyer Rafique Ahmed Siraji.

Supreme Court lawyer and rights activist Jyotirmoy Barua said that in a clear violation of the law, some quota reform activists were arrested in different cases although there was no specific complaint against them.

There are attempts to label the reformists as "enemy of the state" and the movement as anti-government, he said. "It is not understandable why."

SC lawyer Sara Hossain said there could be debate and disagreement over the extent to which the quota system should be reformed, but there was no doubt that what was done to the reformists was unacceptable.

"The law has not been enforced equally during the movement," she said.

Prof Amena Mohsin of Dhaka University said the state should feel proud of the demonstrators because so many of them are accepting torture because they want a job in the civil service.

Hafiz Uddin Khan, former adviser to a caretaker government, said there was no definitive answer from the government as to why it was opposing the quota reform movement.

"As a nation, we have forgotten to protest," he said.

Reform to the quota system is now a popular demand, he added.

Saleha Begum, mother of reformist Rashed, who is now behind bars, urged the prime minister to release him. Rights activist Khushi Kabir, SC lawyer Subrata Chowdhury and women rights activist Maleka Banu also spoke.

# France's second

FROM PAGE 1

Croatia win, they will be the ninth nation to lift the coveted trophy.

Do they deserve it? Let's have the facts -- they played three knockout games on the trot for 120 minutes and more importantly they did it the hard way. Croatia won their semifinal against England in style -- coming from a goal down to win it 2-1 in extra time, with Mario Mandzukic slamming the winner on 109 minutes. Not only that, they won their three group stage games which included a thumping 3-0 win against two-time world champions Argentina.

This Croatia team have so far not only demonstrated that they have got the qualities, if not pedigree, to go all the way to win the title. They will be up against a team they lost thrice against two draws in the last five meetings, but Croatia's inspirational coach Zlatko Dalic said past statistics would not win his opponents today's final.

"Statics, tradition and head to head -- I don't buy those. Tradition is there to be demolished. We do not mind who is on the other side of the pitch. We have come here to enjoy the moment and give our best. We deserved to play in the final; we want the world to watch Croatia play; we want most of the world to root for us. This is important. We will give our all, we will enjoy our football and whoever is the better team may they win," Dalic said ahead of the final.

After that semifinal heart-break against France in their maiden World Cup appearance in 1998, Croatia lurched from bad to worse in the following three editions of the World Cup. They made it to Russia at the last moment but since then it has been a spectacular journey for them with Luca

Modric playing the key role in a very experienced side.

They might have played more minutes and got less rest compared to France and they have so far proved that they love to grind their way out of a hole. This tough mentality might prove handy for them against an extremely talented yet raw French side, who had only one tough game against Belgium in the semifinal. France were successful in defending a 54th-minute Umтитi lead against Belgium. But the ploy of sitting back against a vastly experienced Croatia side might prove costly for them.

France will bank on the brilliance of Kylian Mbappe to create something on the break. But the key player for the Les Bleus would once again be again Antoine Grizemann and it will be interesting to see who controls the midfield.

France captain Hugo Lloris is well aware that this Croatia team is not only very experienced but have the quality too. He also reminded that they would have to be at their best if they want France to lift the World Cup for a second time and put behind the home disappointment of the Euro 2016 final against Portugal.

Twenty years ago, France joined the exclusive group of World Cup winners, defeating Brazil in the final. Croatia made their first appearance in that year and bowed out, suffering an agonising 2-1 semifinal defeat against France. They will get a second chance at redemption. And if they can do that, it will be gift to the dreamers. Croatia is a country of only four million people, but Dalic promised that the seismic wave back in Croatia would be even bigger than Brazil and Argentina if they win the final.

# Withdraw

FROM PAGE 16

the rebel candidate, Sylhet City BNP General Secretary Badruzzaman Selim, for violating the party's discipline.

In the meantime, Jamaat leader Ehsanul Mahbub Jubayer remains busy wooing voters ahead of the SCC elections. As Jamaat has no registration with the Election Commission, Jubayer would contest the polls as an independent candidate.

Although BNP leaders have repeatedly been trying to ensure a single candidate under the party-led 20-party alliance for the polls, but the BNP rebel, as well as the Jamaat leader, did not withdraw their candidacy.

Under these circumstances, the meeting of the 20-party combine was held.

Other alliance leaders also asked Jamaat leader Mobarak Hossain to withdraw his party-backed candidate from the election, according to leaders who attended the meeting.

At one point, Mobarak came under verbal attack from other leaders. Later, he was asked to comply with the decision of the alliance.

In response, Mobarak told the meeting that he would share his party's stance on the matter after discussions

with top Jamaat leaders.

National Democratic Party Chairman Golam Mortoza said leaders and activists of the alliance were being misguided as Jamaat announced its candidate in the Sylhet election violating the decision of the alliance.

According to insiders, the alliance leaders had reached the decision to form a committee under Fakhru's leadership to carry out electioneering for ensuring Ariful's victory.

Later at a press briefing, Fakhru said, "We want to clarify that there is no division in our 20-party alliance ... during local government elections, every political party usually nominates candidate as per their own decision."

He requested Jamaat to understand the present situation.

Replying to a question on whether nominating individual candidate by Jamaat will impact the national election, Fakhru said, "Such a question does not arise."

In the previous SCC polls held in 2013, Arif had bagged 1,07,330 votes while his rival Awami League nominated candidate Kamran had gotten 72,173 votes.

During that election, Arif was supported by all in the BNP-led alliance.

# Sharif had to return

FROM PAGE 1

favour Imran's campaign for the polls. Imran denies the accusation.

Sharif maintains that his political party is being victimised due to their attempts to question the role of various non-elected institutions in domestic politics and in foreign and security policy.

On the other hand, the country's judiciary, as well as other major state institutions, not only deny Sharif's claims but also assert that PML-N's leadership has failed to curb corruption in its party's ranks, which became the reason for his recent ouster from the prime minister's office.

Moreover, for Sharif, the ongoing efforts to isolate his political party are not just focused on pushing the former out of Pakistan's political system, but are also aimed at weakening and dismantling his political organisation.

A few days ago, Sharif, in a press conference in London said that some state institutions are approaching his party's candidates to force them into leaving the PML-N and are threatening them with dire consequences if they didn't give up their support for him.

Politically, for Sharif, the upcoming election is a do or die situation in terms of the future of his party.

"Who wants to go to jail?", Sharif told the Guardian from the Etihad airlines flight. "But it is a very small price to pay for my mission, which is to establish the sanctity of the vote in Pakistan."

"For Nawaz and Maryam, the decision to return was important. Ever since 1999, Nawaz has been scarred by the taunts that he fled the first chance he got. So, this time around, he needed to do this to wash away that black mark," said political analyst Adnan Rasool, referring to his exile in Saudi Arabia after his ouster by military ruler General Pervez Musharraf in 1999.

"For Maryam, this is the tipping point where she can legitimately play herself to be like the person she has modeled her career on i.e. Benazir Bhutto."

"Another factor being ignored right now is that the party is now crafting a social identity for itself beyond just a political party. The party may have been founded by the patronage of a dictator, but it has essentially built the perception now as the only one to stand up to the iron-fisted interventions of the powers-that-be," Rasool told Dawn, Pakistan's leading daily.

Sharif rose to political prominence during the time of military leader Gen Zia ul-Haq who ruled Pakistan from 1977 to 1988. But he also has a chequered history with military. And his recent move to improve ties with India was not received well by the country's powerful military.

When asked why the Sharifs returned despite knowing the treatment they will receive at home, political analyst Arifa Noor said they had no option.

"Well, I think it was a political necessity. They have been in power for the past five years. They have stakes in Pakistan. ... so if they had stayed away, they would have created too many legal and political problems."

"Nawaz wants to pass his political legacy to his daughter, so if they hadn't returned, they would have lost all of this," she added.

"If Sharif does not come back, his party is over," analyst Rasool Bakhsh Rais told AFP ahead of Sharif's homecoming.

"If he comes back, he will have to fight cases and he will be suffering a lot -- but in this way he will save his party."

Nawaz Sharif was the 15th prime minister in Pakistan's 70-year history -- roughly half of it under military rule -- to be removed before completing a full term.

The military remains the most powerful institution in the country, and has faced allegations in recent months that it is pressuring the media and politicians in a bid to manipulate the polls against the PML-N.

The military has denied the accusations, and said it has "no direct role" in the elections.

# 3 school kids drown in Cox's Bazar

## 2 remain missing; two college students go missing while bathing in the Meghna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Three students of Chakaria Grammar School in Chakaria upazila of Cox's Bazar drowned and two others remained missing after swimming in the Matamuhuri river under Matamuhuri Bridge on the Cox's Bazar-Chittagong highway yesterday afternoon.

According to the headmaster of the school, Rafiqul Islam, the students, divided into two groups, were playing a friendly football match on the char of the river at around 4:00pm.

After the game was over, some of the students went into the river to cool off with a swim during which five of them went missing, he said.

After the upazila administration and the fire brigade were notified, the brigade and locals began rescue efforts with the assistance of the administration at around 5:00pm, said Bakhtiar Uddin Chowdhury, officer-in-charge of Chakaria Police station.

The boys are Sayeed Jawad Orbih, Punnah Bhattacharya, Farhan Bin Shawkat and Aminul Islam Emshad of class-X, and Emshad's younger brother Aftab Hossain Mehrab, an eighth grader.

Three dead bodies have been recovered by a team of divers, the OC said. They have been identified as Emshad, Mehrab, and Farhan.

The rescue mission was still underway till 10:00pm last night as they were trying to find the other two boys, he added.

# Bangladeshi worker in Bahrain dies 'by suicide'

STAR REPORT

A Bangladeshi migrant, who has been living in Bahrain for some four years, was found hanging from a steel pipe on the second floor of a building in Manama, Bahrain, early Friday.

Sohel Azizul Matubbar, 32, went to Bahrain as a tailor but has been doing odd jobs for the last four years since he lost his job and overstayed his visa.

According to the Labour Market Regulatory Authority, Sohail hailed from Madaripur and went to work as a tailor to Bahrain, home to some four lakh Bangladeshis.

He was the second migrant worker to have committed suicide this week, after Indian national Gurbhej Singh on Tuesday night, reports Gulf Daily News (GDN) online from Bahrain.

Both bodies have been taken to the morgue at Salmaniya Medical Complex.

Bangladeshi Embassy community leader Taj Uddin Sikandar Ali told the GDN that they have been trying to track down Matubbar's family.

"According to his roommates he did not have a visa and was without a job for almost four years," he said.

"We are trying to trace his family in Bangladesh using the copy of a passport that was found in his possession."

One of the roommates said Matubbar used a bed sheet to hang himself from a steel pipe in the balcony.

He also described him as a loner -- adding that he often did not take part in group activities.

"I saw him sitting in the balcony the night before and as always he was thoughtful and smoking," said the Bangladeshi national on the condition of anonymity.

"I was woken up by the loud cries of another roommate at around 4am and was shocked to see him hanging from a steel pipe.

"One of our friends who went to work around the same time said that he saw him sitting there smoking, he was a heavy smoker, at least three packets a day.

"We are 24 men living in a flat with three rooms, eight in each room, and Shohel was very silent, he did not share much with anyone.

He said the flatmates felt they could have helped if Matubbar had shared his problems with them.

"We all get back from work and are always on phone with our families, but he was very quiet and spoke very little even to his family," he recalled.

"Sometimes when we cooked we asked him to join us but he always said he ate from outside.

"I really wish he shared and we could have at least given him some solace -- we are all struggling but suicide was not the solution."

# Paid and run

FROM PAGE 16

and they carried out the murder, he said.

On Friday, a DB team arrested five suspects in the murder case, after raiding different places of the capital's Gulshan and Mirpur areas.

They were identified as Mohammad Jakir Hosen, Mohammad Arif Miah, Mohammad Abul Kalam Azad alias Onir, Mohammad Badrul Huda alias Sourav and Mohammad Billal Hosen alias Roni.

Police also claimed to have seized four pistols, four magazines and 12 bullets from their possession.

Detectives said they arrested the five acting on information gleaned from another suspect, Jahurul Islam alias Sujon, who was arrested on July 10. He already gave a confessional statement in court.

While addressing the press briefing, Baten said Sourav and Onir, along with another shooter Nur Islam, took part in the killing.

Nur is now dead. He and another suspect Amit alias Dada Amit, a member of "Mehedi Group", were killed in a "gunfight" with police on July 4.

DB Deputy Commissioner Mashiur Rahman, who is coordinating the investigation into the Farhad killing, told The Daily Star that they had so far found the involvement of 16 people in the murder. Of them, two were killed in a "gunfight" and six were in police custody.

"We have gotten details of others but some of them are staying abroad," he said, adding that the law enforcers were trying to arrest all the suspects.

On May 9, Abdul Razzak Babu alias "Dish Babu", a cable TV operator, was killed in Badda following feuds over his business. Earlier on April 23, Kamruzzaman Dukhu, 35, brother of Badda Thana AL General Secretary Jahangir Alam, was murdered over establishing supremacy in cement and land business.

Investigators said instructions for both the murders came from Malaysia.

Top criminals, hiding in the UK, the USA, Sweden, Malaysia and India, were running criminal gangs in Bangladesh. They were trying to create unstable situation in the country, said Baten.

"After the Farhad killing, they had planned to kill another person," he said, adding, "We are trying to locate all the members of the gangs."

Those who run gangs in Badda despite being abroad include Robin and Dalim, both in Malaysia, and Sakhat Hossain Chanchal and Nahid, who are in the USA and Sweden respectively.

Chanchal left the country in 2013 after the killing of Jubo League leader Riazul Haque Khan Milky. Others, including Robin, Dalim and Nahid, went abroad between 2005 and 2008 after the Rapid Action Battalion began a massive crackdown on criminals, the sources said.

But the criminals still have a strong grip on Badda through their paid killers. Police sources said 21 people were killed in Badda in two years since April 2016. Most of the victims were shot dead.

Wishing anonymity, a deputy commissioner of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police told The Daily Star that Badda has become a "hotbed of crimes".

"Repeated killings using firearms are a clear indication of deterioration of law and order of a particular area," he said, adding such killings were taking place in Badda in broad daylight as the planners and patrons

remained off the hook.

Police said each of the top criminals runs three separate groups, each consisting of five to six members.

The first group takes part in the decision making, the second group collects information about the target and the third group carries out the murder, they said.

Two top police officials, keeping an eye on the gangs for over a decade, said the gang leaders held meetings with the decision making group in Malaysia and discussed various issues of the gangs.

"We are working to bring back the criminals hiding abroad," Baten said.

# Mirror

FROM PAGE 16

designer Berk Ilhan decided to focus his work primarily on products that would cultivate joy and benefit cancer patients directly.

"She told me in the first days after her diagnosis, it was difficult for her to look in the mirror and acknowledge she had cancer," he said. "Our facial expressions affect how we feel. If we flex our facial muscles to smile, our brains think that something good happened and as a result, (we feel) happiness."

After earning his master's degree at the School of Visual Arts in New York, Ilhan spent several weeks visiting cancer hospitals in Turkey speaking to both patients and doctors.

"I learned morale and social support are two very important factors that can positively change a patient's experience," Ilhan said in an interview with CNN.

He spent two years designing and developing the mirror, the idea behind it being that smiling, even when forced, can genuinely make us feel better, according to research known as the facial feedback hypothesis. Laughter is linked to improved immune system function, and some researchers claim it can even increase our lifespans.

Ilhan is currently producing the mirror in limited quantities at the previously mentioned price of \$2000-\$3000 (USD). The product, however, will soon be launching a Kickstarter campaign in which Ilhan hopes to raise enough funds to bring the price down to \$500 (USD). He also intends to donate the mirror to hospitals when it is financially feasible to do so.

Despite Ilhan's excellent intentions, the mirror has not been universally well received. Some feel that it is condescending at best, and exploitative at worst considering the shockingly high price. Others have even compared the mirror to the common street harassment most women experience when strangers demand they smile.

# First hajj flight

FROM PAGE 2

August 15 and 172 post-hajj flights (143 dedicated and 29 scheduled) from August 27 to September 25, officials said.

It would also operate nine and three hajj flights from Chittagong and Sylhet respectively.

Biman would carry 63,599 pilgrims, half of the total 127,198 pilgrims this year. The Saudi Arabian Airlines would carry the rest.

Talking to reporters, the civil aviation minister said, "We have made all-out preparations to ensure sound hajj flights and taken necessary measures to check any sort of harassment to the pilgrims."

# Turning pulp into profits

FROM PAGE 16

earnings by making Amsotto.

"After I finish the housework I make Amsotto in my leisure time," says Hazera Khatun from Rajpara village.

"It's additional income for our family." Bogi Khatun, from nearby Chhatrijpur village, says, "I've already sold Tk 5,000 of Amsotto this year. I expect to earn around Tk 10,000 more."

From Jalmachhari in Shibganj municipality and like many of her fellow students, Rekha Khatun too combines her usual study with making Amsotto. "Women of all ages are involved," she says. "Amsotto fetches up to Tk 50 per kilogram in the market."

The product isn't difficult to make, explains Habiba Begum from the Kansat area of the town. First, women and children source ripe mangoes, either from an orchard or the market. The mangoes are peeled to extract pulp, which is cut into small pieces before being ground into a paste. Juices are squeezed out by hand. After straining the pulp it is spread out evenly to dry, at first on a stove and then by the sun. Gradually the pulp solidifies. The best amsotto retains the original flavour, in all its tangy sweetness.

Amsotto making is particularly popular with women from economically struggling families, as they have ready access to mangoes and can easily sell the finished product, either to door-to-door traders or at the Kansat

wholesale market.

It's a seasonal industry that provides opportunity for traders too.

"Actually I am a farmhand," says Abdul Mannan from Tikori village in Mobarokpur union. "But for the last eight years I have earned good money selling Amsotto, but only during the three months of the mango season."

He collects around a hundred kilograms of the product from village households daily, to sell at the market.

Buyers like Mohammad Rumon arrive at the Kansat wholesale market from as far away as Shyambazar in the capital. "I've been coming to Kansat for several years. The Amsotto sold here is the best for colour and flavour. I send up to forty maunds per day to Dhaka."

"Amsotto is a reliable investment," says another wholesaler, Anarul Haque. "Consumer demand is always increasing. I send Amsotto to Dhaka, Sylhet and Comilla each season, for a handsome profit."

The deputy director of the agriculture department in Chapainawabganj, Monjurul Huda, notes that the amsotto business is particularly helpful for women, with profits benefitting their families. "If we further promote this product, more women will have the opportunity to earn extra income during the mango season," he says.

While Kansat may be the largest wholesale market, there are around twenty Amsotto trading points across Chapainawabganj, up to thirty kilometres from the district town.