

Quader meets CPB chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday met Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) President Mujahidul Islam Selim at the CPB office in the city.

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, went to the Mukti Bhaban, headquarters of CPB, around 11:00am.

"It was just a courtesy meeting... nothing else. Quader said he had not come to [our] office after being elected as the general secretary. So that's why he came and had a cup of tea with us," Selim told The Daily Star.

Asked whether they discussed politics, Selim said, "No political discussion took place."

Recently, the CPB and seven other political parties formed an alliance styled "Left Democratic Alliance (LDA)".

After its formation, they demanded that the present parliament be dissolved before the announcement of the next general election schedule.

The LDA also demanded formation of a neutral election-time government and reorganisation of the Election Commission after discussions with all political parties and different groups of people.

The CPB did not participate in the 2014 general elections despite the ruling AL calling on the party to take part in it during a meeting before the polls at the Gono Bhaban.

Court extends Khaleda's bail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday extended the bail of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia until July 31 in the Zia Charitable Trust graft case.

Judge Md Akhtaruzzaman of the Special Judge Court-5 of Dhaka passed the order after Khaleda's lawyer Ziauddin Zia submitted a petition seeking extension of her bail.

The same day was fixed for hearing arguments on behalf of two other accused.

The same court on July 17 extended the bail of Khaleda until today.

The case was filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission with Tejgaon police in August 2011 accusing Khaleda and three others of abusing power to raise funds for the trust from unknown sources.

The three other accused are: Harris Chowdhury, political secretary of then prime minister Khaleda between 2001 and 2006, Ziaul Islam Munna, assistant private secretary (APS) to Harris, and Monirul Islam Khan, APS to former Dhaka city mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka.

Of them, Harris is on the run, while Munna and Monirul are now on bail. The two were present in the court yesterday.

Khaleda, accused in more than 34 cases, is currently serving a five-year prison term in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case.

In another development, the High Court yesterday continued for the seventh day hearing on an appeal filed by Khaleda challenging the lower court's verdict that sentenced her to five years' imprisonment in the graft case.

The HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman also fixed today for resuming the hearing.

Ensure quick

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money remain unused, eventually delaying the projects and raising their costs. This is a key reason for poor implementation of annual development programme.

According to the minister, between 80 percent and highest 93 percent of project money is used.

The DCs suggested that the finance ministry introduce crop insurance under government initiatives so farmers in the coastal belt get compensation for damage to their crops by natural disasters.

Meanwhile, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid sought cooperation from the deputy commissioners to check question papers leak in the upcoming public examinations, he told reporters later.

In another development, the information ministry has directed the DCs to circulate government's development activities, progress of mega projects and about the prime minister and her vision at every corner of the country.

"The information ministry will prepare and supply the materials for circulation. We have told them to disseminate that in every meetings, at bazars and in localities," State Minister for Information Tarana Halim told journalists.

As some DCs complained that many online portals in the districts were running baseless stories and that they should be brought under registration, Tarana said that her ministry was already working to do so.

Step up efforts

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Burgener said she travelled widely, met government officials including State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi three times and got approval to open a small office in Myanmar's capital, Naypyitaw. She said she plans to return to Myanmar in September.

"I need dialogue, and for that I need open doors," to discuss "critical questions" and advise the government on "how they can also change the attitude of the communities on the ground."

Burgener told reporters, "I think Myanmar is not a country which is reacting quite on pressure, but it's up to the Security Council."

Sweden's UN ambassador, Olof Skoog, the current council president, stressed the importance of unity, though he said his country thinks progress has been "far too slow", according to the AP report.

"I think there is a recognition among Security Council members that there have been positive steps taken lately. It's also fair to say that many of those steps are far from sufficient," Skoog said. "As long as the council is unified in terms of engagement, but also on putting pressure, I think we are making progress slowly."

This was the fifth UNSC meeting since the previous meetings held on September 28, November 6 and December 12 in 2017, and February 13, 2018. But, the Security Council could not take any action against Myanmar as China, backed by Russia, blocked even any UNSC statement.

"Some members of the council have kept us from taking action for cynical and self-interested reasons," US Ambassador in United Nations Nikki Haley said in Security Council meeting in May. "Some undermined the unity of the council demonstrated during the trip with unhelpful edits that only

Electioneering

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government.

Elections in the three city corporations will be held on July 30. In the last polls in 2013, BNP-backed candidates won all the three mayor posts defeating the AL favourites.

After being elected as Sylhet mayor, Arif was suspended twice over criminal cases. He could serve in the office for only 31 months out of his five-year tenure.

Immediate past Rajshahi mayor Bulbul was also suspected twice over criminal cases and served in the office for only 23 months.

POLLS IN SYLHET

Many voters in Sylhet said Kamran, president of Sylhet city AL, cannot highlight his development works during campaigning as the city residents are aware of what Ariful has done in last five years, and that too being in the opposition party and remaining behind bars for a major period of his tenure.

During electioneering, Kamran has been focusing on the national development works carried out by the government. He is claiming that all the development projects taken up by Ariful are mainly implemented by the AL government.

"Ariful is showing the government's development projects as his personal achievement. But the people are aware of it. They know that electing an Awami League nominee as mayor will speed up the development works," he said.

On the other hand, Ariful has been highlighting his development works, including development of the drainage system, extension of roads, recovery of canals from grabbers to solve water logging, construction of Nagar Bhaban and digitalisation of the corporation.

Talking to The Daily Star recently, Ariful said, "People know how I worked for the city's development though the government put me in jail for around three years. If a fair election is held, the voters will definitely stand by development."

The erstwhile Sylhet Municipality was upgraded to a city corporation in 2001 and the first city corporation election was held in 2003.

Kamran, also the last chairman of Sylhet Municipality, was elected as the first mayor of the city corporation.

Contesting the mayoral polls in 2008 from behind bars, he was re-elected as mayor, beating his nearest rival by 83,339 votes.

But he lost to Ariful, a member of BNP central committee, in 2013 by a margin of 31,157 votes.

After taking office in 2013, Arif along with Finance Minister AMA Munith visited different areas in the city; fixed the priorities of the development works and took many development initiatives. That is why his suspension did not have any impact on the city's development works, said some voters.

LITON UNVEILS MANIFESTO

In Rajshahi, BNP candidate Bulbul yesterday unveiled his election manifesto focusing on some current national issues.

Talking to journalists at a community centre in the city, he said, "I could serve at the mayor's office for only 23 months out of my sixty-month tenure as I was suspended twice. How could I work under such a situation?"

However, Liton during his polls

weakened the council's message."

China also proposed substantial amendments to a British-drafted Security Council statement on Myanmar on May 9 and the 15-member council eventually agreed a weaker statement, which also urged Myanmar to step up its efforts to create conditions conducive to safe, voluntary and dignified return of the Rohingyas. It also urged Myanmar to address the root causes of the crisis through implementation of the Rakhine Advisory Commission recommendations, including those related to human rights, citizenship, poverty alleviation and development.

Apart from the 15 Security Council members' visit, UN Secretary General, World Bank President and UN agencies chief visited the refugees in Cox's Bazar on July 1-2 and their call was identical to them and previous meetings, but there are serious doubts about the conducive conditions in Rakhine for safe, voluntary and sustainable repatriation of the Rohingyas from Bangladesh.

"The conditions are simply not there for a large number of people to return home," Red Cross President Peter Maurer, who recently visited Myanmar, told a press conference in Dhaka on July 3.

Dire conditions led more than 300,000 to 500,000 to flee the country between 2012 and 2016 and the latest crisis in Rakhine began on August 25, 2017 that forcibly displaced over 700,000 Rohingyas, who fled Myanmar and took shelter in Bangladesh.

The military crackdown was accused of widespread human rights violations, including rape, murder, torture and burning of Rohingya villages and thousands are believed to have been killed which the UN, US and international rights bodies said "text book example of ethnic cleansing".

campaign said Bulbul could not carry out development works due to his "incapability". "How could the Sylhet mayor do more development works than those done in Rajshahi?"

Talking to The Daily Star, Bulbul recently said although he had been the mayor in the last five years, Liton "controlled everything" in the city as his party was in state power.

"During my suspension, a relative of Liton performed the duties of city mayor and increased the holding taxes," he said.

In Barisal, BNP's Mujibur Rahman Sarwar might lose votes to the nominee of Islami Andolon Bangladesh. Besides, the votes of BSD candidate Monisha Chakraborty might have a negative impact on the results of AL nominee Serniabad Sadik Abdullah, said local experts.

Prof Maksudur Rahman Khan, secretary of Barisal Political Science Parishad, said, "The candidate of Islami Andolon Bangladesh might secure around 30,000 votes which would have gone in favour of BNP. The BSD's supporters used to vote for Awami League."

Hundreds

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"We do not have any formal information yet about any casualties or how many are missing," an official in Attapeu province, where much of the flooding occurred, told AFP on condition of anonymity, adding that was no phone signal in the flooded region.

"We sent rescue teams who will help them and provide basic assistance first," the official added.

The Thai government said it would also send rescue experts to its northern neighbour.

HEAVY RAINFALL

The \$1.2 billion dam is part of a project by Vientiane-based Xe Pian Xe Namnoy Power Company, or PNP, a joint venture formed in 2012 between a Laotian, a Thai and two South Korean companies, according to the project's website.

Ratchaburi Electricity Generating Holding, the Thai company, said it had been told by operators that a 770-metre-long auxiliary dam used to divert river water had failed after heavy rainfall.

"The incident was caused by continuous rainstorm which caused high volume of water to flow into the project's reservoir," it said in a statement.

One of the South Korean companies, SK Engineering and Construction, said it had sent a crisis team to Laos, according to Yonhap news agency, and was bringing in helicopters from Thailand.

South Korea's foreign ministry said another Korean firm, Korea Western Power, was also involved. The companies and others had sent helicopters, boats and rescue workers.

"All of our 53 nationals who were taking part in this construction evacuated in advance," the ministry said in a statement.

Pope Francis said in a Vatican message he had learned with sadness of the loss of life, and expressed "herfelt solidarity" with all those affected.

The 410 megawatt capacity plant was supposed to start commercial operations by 2019, according to the venture's website.

The project consists of a series of dams over the Houay Makchanh, the Xe-Namnoy and the Xe-Pian rivers in Champasak Province.

Citizen group

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of police, he was attacked several times and injured, it said.

It also said the incident put into question the legal safeguard and security of the general people, especially those having dissenting opinions.

It is to be noted that the number of defamation, sedition and other cases filed under ICT act by the government and its loyalists have increased lately, the statement said.

"We are aware of the allegations of several controversial activities of Mahmudur Rahman. And there is a way for deciding his offence and punishment through fair trial," it said, adding that he went to the surrender before the court.

In this situation, such an attack on him is tantamount to severe violation of human rights, it said, adding, "We strongly condemn the attack."

"We think the judiciary has the scope to play suo moto role with regard to the severe violation of human rights offenses," the platform said.

Supreme Court lawyer Shahdeen Malik, Dhaka University Prof Asif Nazrul, Barrister Sara Hossain, Professor CR Abrar of the international relations department at the University of Dhaka, Barrister Jyotirmoy Barua, rights activist Nur Khan and public health specialist Dr Zafullah Chowdhury, are among the sixteen people who made the statement on behalf of the platform.

Known as a pro-BNP-Jamaat intellectual, Mahmudur Rahman came under attack when he was coming out of a Kushtia court room after getting permanent bail in a defamation case filed by the district unit BCL President Yasir Arafat on December 10, 2107.

ATTACKERS ARE BNP-SHIBIR MEN: BCL

Yasir Arafat, president of Kushtia Chhatra League, yesterday denied that they attacked Mahmudur and he demanded justice through a fair investigation.

At a press conference at a hotel in the district town, he blamed local BNP and Jamaat activists, as well as common people, for the attack, claiming that no BCL men were present during the attack.

"It will be clear who the attackers are if they are identified through a fair investigation. We have already talked to the local administration to find out the attackers," Arafat said.

Mahmudur claimed Tushar and other BCL activists had launched the attack.

Arafat said, "As a plaintiff, I went to the court area, along with my followers, and left the place by 3:00pm without creating any disturbance," he claimed.

He said that the attack began around 4:30pm when he was not there.

"There were some people wearing masks. And you (journalist) know who wear such masks. Chhatra League men never wear masks; it's the militants who do this," he said.

BCL General Secretary Sa'ad Ahmed claimed that a conflict between former district unit BNP president Shahidul Islam and incumbent president Syed Mehedi Ahmed Rumi may have led to the attack.

2 Bangladeshi

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told reporters in Lucknow.

The duo was apprehended from Surajpur police station area in Greater Noida near Delhi on Monday by UP Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) and a team of West Bengal police.

They were taken for interrogation by officials of the UP ATS and the intelligence department, Greater Noida district SSP Ajay Pal Sharma said.

An official of the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime Unit in Bangladesh, preferring anonymity, said the two were JMB men and were also wanted in Bangladesh.

Sharma claimed the two JMB members were planning to carry out a major terror strike in the National Capital Region (NCR).

Singh said both were active members of the JMB and they would be taken by West Bengal police on transit remand for further interrogation.

"A team of UP ATS will interrogate Musa and Rubel," he said.

The operation began when the UP intelligence department received a tip-off that some JMB members were collecting funds in areas near Delhi for their outfit, he said.

Earlier, three Bangladeshi youths, suspected to have links with Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT), were arrested in Lucknow in September last year by the UP ATS.

Mohammad Imran, Rajiuddin and Mohammad Firdaus, who were brothers, were apprehended while boarding the Howrah-Amritsar Express train, officials said.

The names of the three came out after an ATS team arrested a suspected Bangladeshi terrorist Abdullah, associated with the ABT, from Muzaffarnagar in UP.

ABT was implicated in many crimes, including some brutal attacks and murders of bloggers in Bangladesh.

ATS officials had earlier said Abdullah was associated with the ABT and was allegedly involved in preparing false identities for terrorists, especially for those from Bangladesh, with the help of one Faizan who lived in Deoband (Saharanpur) in UP.

Six killed in 'shootouts'

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Alamgir's family, however, claimed that he was killed because he was a BNP activist.

The Rab official said the gunfight took place when a Rab team raided Pirojpur area at around 4:30am, upon information that drug traders were gathered there.

Upon their arrival, five to six drug traders opened fire at them. After they retaliated, Alamgir was left injured and the rest managed to flee.

He was rushed to Sonargaon Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared him dead, he said.

One foreign pistol, two bullets and 2,000 pieces of yaba were recovered from the spot. Two Rab men were also injured, Rab claimed.

Alamgir's wife Suraiya Akter, however, told our Narayanganj correspondent that on Monday three to four persons forced her husband into a microbus and took off after he left for work.

His family could not trace him the whole day and came to know about his death yesterday morning, she said.

She claimed that Alamgir was never involved in the drug business and supported his family with the rent of some of their shops and house in Kanchpur area.

Alamgir's elder brother Amir Hamza said, "My brother's involvement with BNP politics was his only fault. To whom will we seek justice?"

Locals, however, alleged that Alamgir used to sell beer in the locality, which is why he was called "Beer Alamgir".

Mamun Mahmud, general secretary of Narayanganj district unit BNP, said Alamgir was an active BNP activist and was a president of Kanchpur union Tarun Dal.

"It is tantamount to murder. We never support such extra-judicial killings. We think it is a part of harassing party leaders and activists," he said.

In Natore, Ahadul Islam, 38, a suspected drug peddler was killed in Lalpur upazila at around 2:30am after a gang of criminals opened fire at Rab men, forcing them to retaliate, said

Polls code violated

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But Saheb Bazar is under Rajshahi City Corporation, going to polls on July 30.

AL Organising Secretary Nurul Islam Sarker Aslam said Shekhor's participation in the campaign doesn't fall under the electoral rules. Shekhor is the PM's personal staff and it's not any regular government post, he added.

Also yesterday, Khulna's newly elected Mayor Talukhder Abdul Khaleque was present during the campaign for Liton. But he cannot participate in the electioneering as he had already taken oath of office on July 5, according to the returning officer.

The Khulna mayor, who had been staying in Rajshahi for over a week, went to different local newspaper offices and took part in several election projection meetings of Liton.

AL sources say both Shekhor and Khaleque left Rajshahi yesterday.

Talking to this correspondent, the returning officer said he issued a show-cause notice to Liton on Sunday, asking the candidate as to why actions would not be taken against him over participation of Khaleque in his campaign.

Rain gives

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dwellers struggled due to dearth of vehicles. And then when they managed to get some kind of transport, they were stuck for hours in severe traffic congestion.

Some vehicles turned turtle on waterlogged roads, while drivers, especially of CNG-run three-wheelers, were seen pulling their vehicles as the water seeped into their engines.

"I am completely soaked but I have to attend a seminar now. I then have to go to my office and work in these wet clothes," said Mohammad Abdullah, an employee of a non-government organisation and resident of Moghbazar.

"After waiting for the rain to stop since morning, I finally took a rickshaw at 10:00am as my seminar in Khamarbari would start in an hour," he said.

"After a while, I noticed that most of the roads are gridlocked. So, I let the rickshaw go and began walking instead, even though it was pouring," he added.

Arif Hossain, another city dweller working in a private firm, was forced to go back home after his motorcycle fell on its side due to a pothole which was not visible on a waterlogged road in Agargaon.

"I left from Agargaon to go to my office at Farmgate but was forced to go back home after I fell and was soaked in dirty water," he said.

People from lower-income groups and street vendors were faced with tougher conditions since, due to the

Maj Shibi Mostafa, a company commander of Rab-5 in Natore.

A pistol, two bullets and 57 bottles of phensedyl were recovered from the spot, reports our Natore correspondent quoting Rab.

With these, at least 197 suspected drug traders were killed since the nationwide anti-narcotics drive began on May 4. Most of them were killed in so-called shootouts involving police or Rab.

Jessore police claimed that two alleged robbers were killed in a "gunfight" between two robbery gangs on Pulerhat-Rajganj road of Monirampur upazila.

The identities of the dead could not yet be known.

Hearing gunshots, sub-inspector Ainuddin, in-charge of Khedapara police camp, went to the spot and found two bodies, said Mokarram Hossain, officer-in-charge of Monirampur Police Station.

In Chapainawabganj, a suspected robber killed in "gun battle" with Rab in Shibganj upazila was identified as Faruk Hossain, 35, a resident of the upazila.

Abul Khayer, deputy commander of Chapainawabganj camp of Rab-5, said a patrol team was passing Mohammadpur area around 1:30am when a gang of robbers barricaded Paikortala-Mobarakpur road.

Noticing the arrival of Rab, the robbers opened fire, forcing the Rab officials to fire back, leaving Faruk injured.

He was rushed to Shibganj Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared him dead, the Rab official said.

A pistol, four bullets and two sharp weapons were recovered from the spot.

Rab claimed that Faruk was accused in nine cases.

In Narail, a suspected robber was killed in a "gunfight" at Kachubaria village in Lohagara upazila, reports our Jhenidah correspondent, quoting Prabir Kumar Biswas, officer-in-charge of Lohagara Police Station.

The dead could not yet be identified.

In his reply on Monday, Liton offered an apology and promised that such violations of electoral rules would not happen again, said the returning officer.

Khaleque last week told a local journalist in Rajshahi that he was yet to take over as mayor and that's why he can participate in electioneering.

Contacted by our Khulna correspondent last night, Khaleque again said he will take charge on September 26, and until then, he is not enjoying any government benefits or salary. So, he claimed, he is not violating any rules by campaigning for Liton.

Also on Monday, during a Chhatra League meeting held at Godagari upazila auditorium, AL lawmaker Omar Faruk Chowdhury sought vote for Liton. In his speech there, he said if Liton was elected, Rajshahi would become the greatest city of Asia.

The event was covered in local newspapers along with his photographs. In the reports, the lawmaker was quoted as saying he didn't campaign in the city corporation area.

But according to the electoral codes, no MP can join any electioneering.

torrential rain, many could not operate their shops.

Thai plane

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only runway of the airport. The flight operations resumed around 2:30pm.

Six flights were diverted to the airports in Chittagong and Sylhet during the time, said Abdullah, adding that the incident also delayed a hajj flight by an hour.

Meanwhile, an official from the Civil Aviation Authority, Bangladesh said the incident would be investigated by the Thai authorities.

Tigers look

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to win the series in Guyana. St Kitts is a smaller ground and also has a batting-friendly wicket, which will be an advantage for West Indies' big hitters like Chris Gayle, Evin Lewis and Andre Russell.

But today, it will again be up to Tamim Iqbal, Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mahmudullah Riyad and captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza to utilise their understanding of the wicket and give a much-needed trophy to the nation. Tamim hit an unbeaten century and Shakib scored 97, and they also combined for Bangladesh's highest second-wicket stand of 207 before Mashrafe took four for 37 to clinch the first ODI.

The Tigers are likely to remain unchanged for the second ODI. The one change could be Liton Das coming in for opener Anamul Haque, who was out for a duck on Sunday.