

Brighten image of national airlines

Prime minister asks officials, flags off Biman's new Dreamliner

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the employees of Biman Bangladesh Airlines to work with maximum integrity to brighten the image of the airlines as well as the country.

"I want every single person in Biman to work with utmost sincerity so that it [Biman] does not earn a 'bad name'," she said.

The PM made the call while inaugurating the operation of the newly inducted 787 Dreamliner "Akashbeena" to Biman's fleet at the VIP lounge of the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

She emphasised on the quick delivery of passenger luggage using modern technology.

Sheikh Hasina also asked the officials concerned to give extra attention to security issues. "You must always give proper attention to the security matters in the airport."

In the recent past, she mentioned, some countries imposed sanctions on Bangladesh (cargo ban). "One country withdrew its sanction as security at our airports have improved," she said.

Briefly describing various government efforts to improve the service of the airlines, the prime minister said the government had reached a purchase agreement with Canada to acquire another three Dash-8 Bombardier aircrafts, aiming at increasing domestic connectivity.

She said the government was working for developing the country's airports as well. "The Cox's Bazar Airport runway has been expanded, while the

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina looks at a scale model of Biman's new Boeing 787 Dreamliner at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Five JMB men held in Bogra

STAR REPORT

Police claim to have arrested five members including two military wing leaders of outlawed militant outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh in Bogra's Sherpur upazila early yesterday.

The arrestees are identified as Shahidullah alias Masum alias Gopal, 46, Bulbul alias Sohag, 32, Masud Rana, 31, converted Muslim Atikur Rahman alias Saikat and Mizanur Rahman Mizan alias Tailor alias Dorzi Mizan.

Based on information from the Lawful Interception Unit (LIU) of Police Headquarters, detectives arrested the five in Mirzapur Ranirhat Bazar area around 1:30am, said Superintendent of Police of Bogra Md Ali Ashraf Bhuiyan.

The members of Detective Branch of police also recovered one 7.65 pistol, one 9mm pistol, two magazines, 10 rounds of bullets, three sharp Burmese knives and one handcuff.

The police claim Shahidullah is the military and Isaba (operation wing)

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POLLS UNDER NEUTRAL GOVT BNP, Juktafront, Gonoforum to wage a united movement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the BNP, Juktafront and Gonoforum yesterday stressed the need for unity to wage a movement for a fair and acceptable national election under a neutral administration after dissolving parliament.

Specific programmes would be announced soon, they said at a discussion titled "Boycotting Electronic Voting Machines: national election and political alliance" at the Jatiya Press Club organised by Nagorik Oikya.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said, "Let us unite and wage a movement.... We will try to protect the people's rights and save the country even at the cost of the last drop of our blood."

Nagorik Oikya, Bikolpodhara Bangladesh and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal formed Juktafront in December last year.

The programmes would not cause sufferings to commuters, said Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury of Bikolpodhara.

"Democracy exists only for the ruling party, not for the opposition. We have tolerated the undemocratic situation and autocratic rule in the country for many years in the name of democracy. We will not tolerate this anymore," he said.

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Woodward's new book stirs up a storm

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book, published on 11 September.

SYRIA'S PRESIDENT

After Bashar al-Assad launched a chemical attack on civilians in April 2017, Trump is reported to have told his defence secretary he wanted the Syrian president assassinated.

Woodward alleges that the US leader called James Mattis and said: "Let's f***ing kill him! Let's go in. Let's kill the f***ing lot of them."

Mattis told Trump he would "get right on it", but after hanging up the phone he told a senior aide: "We're not going to do any of that. We're going to be much more measured."

The administration's national security team instead drew up plans for limited airstrikes which did not threaten the Syrian president personally.

RUSSIA PROBE

Trump's former personal lawyer John Dowd is said to have told the president

that he would probably end up in prison if he testified to special counsel Robert Mueller's probe into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election.

To illustrate his point he reportedly staged a practice interrogation with the president, who responded to questions with "stumbles, contradictions and lies" before losing his cool.

"Don't testify," Dowd allegedly told him. "It's either that or an orange jumpsuit."

But Trump is said to have been convinced he could handle Mueller's questions, declaring: "I'll be a real good witness."

"You are not a good witness," Dowd replied. "Mr President, I'm afraid I just can't help you."

He resigned the next morning.

SESSIONS 'MENTALLY RETARDED'

A frequent target of Trump's Twitter attacks, according to the book, the attorney general Jeff Sessions behind closed doors.

Speaking to then staff secretary Rob Porter, he is said to have described Sessions as a "traitor" for recusing himself from the Russia probe.

Mocking the attorney general's accent, he reportedly added: "This guy is mentally retarded. He's this dumb Southerner... He couldn't even be a one-person country lawyer down in Alabama."

'A FIFTH- OR SIXTH-GRADER'

Some of the president's closest advisers are depicted in the book as being exasperated by his ignorance about key issues.

During a National Security Council meeting, Trump is said to have asked why the US was spending resources on maintaining a military presence in the Korean peninsula.

"We're doing this in order to prevent World War III," his defence secretary told him.

Woodward recounts: "Mattis was particularly exasperated and alarmed, telling close associates that the president acted like - and had the understanding of - a fifth- or sixth-grader."

'WE'RE IN CRAZY TOWN'

White House chief of staff John F Kelly frequently vented his fury about Trump and told colleagues he thought the president was "unhinged", the book claims.

In one small group meeting, Kelly is reported to have said: "He's an idiot. It's pointless to try to convince him of anything. He's gone off the rails. We're in Crazytown. I don't even know why any of us are here. This is the worst job I've ever had."

ADVISER STOLE DOCUMENTS

Faced with Trump's rage and unpredictability, the president's cabinet members and other senior officials learned to "learned to act discreetly" to foil his most dangerous impulses, Fear claims.

In one instance, Gary Cohn, the

president's former top adviser, "stole a letter off Trump's desk" to prevent the president signing it. Had he done so, it would have formally withdrawn the US from a trade agreement with South Korea.

Cohn later told an associate he swiped the letter to protect national security and that the president did not notice it was missing.

He is said to have used similar tactics to prevent Trump taking the country out of the North American Free Trade Agreement last year.

WHITE SUPREMACISTS

Facing intense criticism for saying "both sides" were to blame for deadly neo-Nazi violence in Charlottesville in August 2017, Trump was convinced by aides to publicly condemn white supremacists and the Ku Klux Klan.

Almost immediately after issuing the statement he reportedly told aides it was "the biggest f***ing mistake I've made" and the "worst speech I've ever given".

65 Bangladeshi workers rescued in Malaysia

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Bangladeshi, 61 types of documents including contracts, payment vouchers and records pertaining to the company's dealing with the home ministry.

The rescue comes three days after the new Malaysian government launched a major crackdown against undocumented migrants.

Mustafar yesterday did not name the two suspected human traffickers, but said they were directors of the company and submitted false information to the home ministry for hiring foreign workers.

He said the Immigration Department was looking for another suspect, also a director of the company.

Cases were filed against the arrestees under anti-human trafficking act and money laundering act. If they are found guilty, their properties can be confiscated, the immigration chief added.

According to Malaysian authorities, some 7,000 Bangladeshis have been detained in the country since January 1

this year for violating immigration rules. Around 23,000 people from other countries have been picked up during this period for the same offence.

Officials at the Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur said some one million Bangladeshis now live in Malaysia, but nearly half of them might be undocumented.

Migrant rights groups have said most of the undocumented migrants are victims of human trafficking or exploitation of the employers and

agents. They demanded the government halt the crackdown and punish the errant employers and agents.

In 2007-08, when Malaysia recruited some four lakh Bangladeshis, Malaysia's rights body Tenaganita, in its research, found hundreds of Bangladeshi migrants who were recruited for fake companies.

The workers, despite paying hefty sums to go to the Southeast Asian country for "a better life", remained jobless and had to return home empty-

handed.

Many were even confined to their dormitories for weeks when there were no jobs. They were supplied to other companies but were paid low wages and sometimes were not paid at all.

In 2018, Malaysia slipped to Tier 2 Watch list from Tier 2 in the US State Department's annual Trafficking in Persons.

This means Malaysia's status in terms of curbing human trafficking has gone down.

Punish me as much as you want

FROM PAGE 1

"This court cannot run like this."

The BNP chief's lawyers boycotted yesterday's proceedings, protesting the shifting of the court to the old central jail from Alia Madrasa premises in Old Dhaka.

The court adjourned the proceedings and set September 12-13 for the next hearing.

On Tuesday, the law ministry issued a gazette notification, saying the proceedings in the Zia Charitable Trust case would be held at the old central jail on Nazimuddin Road. The decision, it said, was made taking Khaleda's security into consideration.

The move set off a debate with the BNP claiming this was "contradictory to the country's constitution". This is not an open trial, it said.

The 73-year-old BNP chief landed in jail on February 8, following her conviction and sentence in the Zia Orphanage graft case.

At about 12:10pm yesterday, a female prison official brought Khaleda to the courtroom in a wheelchair, guarded by six others. Khaleda's attendant Fatema was seen walking behind her.

Draped in a pink scarf, Khaleda looked frail. A piece of white cloth was wrapped around her waist down. She was wearing white shoes.

The prison official took her to the right side of the dock where two other accused in the case -- BNP activists Monirul Islam Khan and Ziaul Islam Munna -- were standing.

A bottle of water and a box of tissue paper were kept on a small table in front of her.

The prosecutors sat opposite her while the judge's chair was on her right.

As none of her counsels was present in the courtroom, Khaleda gestured with her right hand for pro-BNP lawyer Golam Mostafa Khan, president of Dhaka Bar Association, to come to her. Her hand was shaking.

Mostafa, who sat around 10 feet



Law enforcers take position in front of the jail gate during the trial of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

from Khaleda, went to her and talked with her in a low voice.

It was hot and humid inside the packed courtroom on the ground floor of a building on the old jail premises. The nine fans fitted with the white false ceiling proved inadequate to cool off the 500-600 square-foot room.

Some 30 reporters and two pro-BNP lawyers, including Mostafa, were waiting for the proceedings to begin. About 20 police personnel stood guard inside.

Judge Md Akhtaruzzaman entered

the courtroom around 12:15pm.

Using a microphone, prosecution lawyer Mosharrar Hossain Kajal told the court that he had already communicated to Khaleda's lawyers about the shifting of the court.

He also mentioned that a notice in this regard was hung at the previous location of the special court on Alia Madrasa premises.

Taking the court's permission, Mostafa said, "I came here as president of Dhaka Bar Association. None of madam's [Khaleda] lawyers is present in the court. There was a huge commu-

nication gap.

"We learnt about the shifting of the court from TV scrolls. Madam's lawyers may not be aware of it. Considering this, hearing in this case may be deferred and a new date fixed..."

In response, the judge asked Mostafa to contact Khaleda's lawyers, saying he would resume proceedings an hour later.

Mostafa then said he was out of contact with Khaleda's lawyers as he had to keep his mobile phone with the guards outside the jail.

"I am disconnected from all since

9:30am. How can I communicate with them? I request you [the judge] to fix a new date."

At one stage, Khaleda told the court, "There is no justice here. There will be punishment." She was not given any microphone.

The judge then said he changed his decision and set September 12-13 for the next hearing, adjourning the proceedings around 12:45pm.

When Khaleda was leaving the courtroom, this correspondent asked how she was.

In reply, Khaleda, who saw through the entire proceedings sitting in the wheelchair, said, "I am very sick. My left leg is swollen ... It's almost paralysed. My left hand is almost in the same condition. My legs swell if I sit for long."

She then showed her left hand that looked swollen.

Khaleda also expressed anger over the notice on the shifting of the court.

"The decision to shift the court was made a week ago, then why the gazette notification was issued yesterday?"

She also alleged that her lawyers were not allowed to defend her at the court.

This was the first time in seven months that Khaleda was produced before a court.

She appeared before the same court the last time on February 8 when she was convicted and sentenced to five years' imprisonment.

The Anti-Corruption Commission filed the Zia Charitable Trust graft case against Khaleda and three others with Tejaon Police Station in August, 2011, for abusing power and raising funds for the trust from unknown sources.

Talking to this newspaper, Ahmed Azam Khan, an adviser to the BNP chairperson, said there is no instance in the country's history that trial of a case against any civilian has been held inside a prison.

"Trial of Colonel Taher inside a jail was totally different compared to the

one involving Begum Khaleda Zia as Taher was a military official and was convicted under the military rule," he said.

Contacted, Masud Ahmed Talukdar, another counsel for Khaleda, said they boycotted the proceedings as they had not been informed in due time about the shifting of the court.

He further said they would move to the High Court and challenge the government decision.

Later in the afternoon, Barrister Muhammad Nawshad Zamir served a legal notice on the secretary of the law, justice and parliamentary affairs ministry on behalf of Khaleda with a request to cancel the gazette notification on the shifting of the court.

It mentioned that appropriate legal action will be taken if the law ministry does not cancel the notification by September 8.

Yesterday, movement of people and vehicles was restricted in the court area. A huge number of law enforcers were deployed in and around the old jail.

Journalists were allowed to enter the courtroom after prosecution lawyer Mosharrar entered it around 10:40am. They had to leave their mobile phones with the guards outside the jail gate before entering the makeshift court.

Since morning, pro-BNP lawyers staged demonstrations at the previous location of the special court on Alia Madrasa premises, protesting the shifting of the court.

At a press briefing at the BNP's Nayapalton central office, the party's Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi announced that the party would form a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club on September 8 and observe a two-hour token hunger strike on September 12, demanding Khaleda's release.

Khaleda is now facing 37 cases. She has secured bail in all but three cases -- two in Comilla and one in Dhaka.