

For one year, Dhaka mum on new Pakistan high commissioner

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka has apparently not accepted the nomination of the new high commissioner of Pakistan to Bangladesh by not responding to the proposed nomination in the last 11 months.

Highly placed diplomatic sources said the Pakistan foreign ministry sent the proposed nomination of its envoy to Bangladesh, Saqlain Syedah, in early March but Bangladesh was yet to respond to the appointment.

Dhaka has neither accepted nor rejected the nomination, foreign ministry officials said here yesterday.

"We have not received any intimation so far from the Bangladesh Foreign Office...its [been a] very long time since we sent the proposal for the new high commissioner," a Pakistani diplomat in Dhaka told The Daily Star yesterday.

Asked whether the Pakistan government was going to propose a new name, the diplomat replied, "How

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BURDWAN BLAST India arrests 2 JMB members

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India's National Investigation Agency arrested two key members of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) involved in the Burdwan blast of October 2014 from West Bengal on Monday.

In a statement, the NIA said Kador Kazi alias Mijanur Rahman alias Harun Mandal, 32, and Sajjad Ali, 21, were arrested from an under-construction building in Hoogly district. They had pretended to be construction workers, the NIA added.

Kador was charge-sheeted in the case for his direct involvement in the militant outfit's conspiracy to wage war against the governments of India and Bangladesh in 2015. He had a reward of Rs 5 lakh on his head, the agency said.

During primary interrogation, Sajjad said he was an associate of Kador and was in touch with other accused JMB members through encrypted messaging apps, the NIA said, adding that materials for making improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were also seized from his possession.

Kador, known to be an explosive expert, and Sajjad, who is part of JMB's recruitment cell, were produced before a Kolkata court and it placed them on a 14-day remand.

Kador is the brother-in-law of

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Rajshahi

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paving the way for Rajshahi to clinch an easy win.

Evans top-scored with a 36-ball 76 with 10 fours and two sixes while ten Deschate blizzed 42 off 18 balls.

Earlier, Sylhet posted 189 for five riding on Nicholas Pooran's 31-ball 76, which was studded with six sixes and as many fours, while Sabbir Rahman scored 45.

In the day's first game, Chittagong Vikings finally broke their three-match losing streak on home soil and clinched an 11-run win over Dhaka Dynamites, ensuring a play-off spot as the third team in the points table.

With seven wins from eleven games, Chittagong are now behind Rangpur Riders and Comilla Victorians on run rate, with all three teams on 14 points.

Electing to bat first, Chittagong posted 174 for five in 20 overs with Cameron Delpoit hitting four sixes and five fours in the innings' top score of 71 off 57 balls. Skipper Mushfiquur Rahim added 43 off 24 balls as the pair contributed 79 for the third wicket.

In reply, Dhaka ended on 163 for nine after 20 overs, falling to their fourth consecutive defeat in the tournament.

Dhaka's Andre Russell registered the third hat-trick of the ongoing sixth edition of the BPL and ended with figures of three for 38 from four overs, while Sunil Narine bagged two wickets.

Russell removed both Mushfiquur and Delpoit with the first two balls of the 20th over before the right-arm seamer completed his hat-trick by dismissing Dasun Shanaka.

Chasing the target, Dhaka were struggling on 23 for three inside four overs. Skipper Shakib Al Hasan top-scored with 53 off 42 balls with six fours, while Russell added 39 off 23.

Pacer Abu Jayed was the pick of the bowlers for Chittagong with figures of three for 25 from his four overs.

It was the last day of matches in the Chattogram leg and the BPL will resume tomorrow in the third and final Dhaka leg, which will end with a champion crowned on February 8.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and lawmakers begin the first session of the newly formed parliament yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

PM welcomes criticism from opposition

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government] ... We never did this in the past and will not do so in future," Hasina mentioned.

Referring to the Speaker, she said, "As the leader of the House, it is my responsibility to uphold the rights of all lawmakers while you as the Speaker will ensure that the lawmakers of the treasury and opposition benches get equal opportunity in parliament.

"We will extend all sorts of cooperation to you [the Speaker] in this regard."

The people have confidence in the government as the previous parliament was run smoothly, she said.

The premier mentioned that her government has been able to maintain the continuation of democratic process, overcoming many obstacles.

Earlier, taking the floor to greet the newly elected Speaker and the Deputy Speaker, GM Quader said, "We want the parliament to be lively ... It has to play an effective role. The people expect so."

He sought the Speaker's assistance for playing an effective role in the House.

Noting that his party has only 22 MPs against 258 lawmakers of the ruling AL in the House, the JP leader said, "We expect this will not create any obstacles to criticising the government."

He hoped the treasury bench would pay heed to logical suggestions from opposition MPs.



Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury



Fazle Rabbi Miah



Noor-E-Alam Chowdhury

Taking the floor, Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon said he was embarrassed over the confusion regarding his party's role in the JS.

"The start of the 11th parliament is pleasant for us on one hand and also a matter of embarrassment on the other hand. This is because we are facing questions from all about our role in the House."

Menon, who was re-elected as a lawmaker with the AL's electoral symbol "boat" in the December 30 polls, claimed that no one (from the ruling party) discussed with them about their role in parliament.

"It appears that a decision has been made and we will have to abide by that."

He mentioned that his party will support the government's development activities to take the country forward and will also be vocal against corruption and disparity.

SPEAKER, DEPUTY SPEAKER RE-ELECTED

At the beginning of the first session at 3:00pm, Shirin was re-elected Speaker uncontested and unanimously by a voice vote for a record third consecutive term.

Rabbi was re-elected Deputy Speaker for a second consecutive term.

AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader put forward Shirin's name for the position of Speaker while ruling party Whip Atiur Rahman Atik proposed Rabbi for the post of Deputy Speaker.

Chief Whip Noor-E-Alam Chowdhury seconded the name of Shirin, and Iqbalur Rahim that of Rabbi.

Shirin and Rabbi were sworn in by President Abdul Hamid at his office in parliament.

CONDOLENCE FOR ASHRAF, OTHERS

The House unanimously adopted a condolence motion on the deaths of AL presidium member and lawmaker

Syed Ashraf Islam and other distinguished personalities.

Participating in the discussion on the motion, Hasina paid a rich tribute to Syed Ashraf, also a former minister and AL general secretary, who died at a Bangkok hospital on January 3.

Hasina broke down in tears and said his death was an irreparable loss.

JP lawmaker Raushan Ershad, and ruling party MPs Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed and Abdur Razzaque, among others, recalled Ashraf's contribution to the country's politics.

The Speaker moved the obituary references separately with brief resumes on those who died after prorogation of the last session of the 10th parliament.

CHIEF WHIP, WHIPS APPOINTED

Before the start of the session in the afternoon, Noor-E-Alam Chowdhury, AL lawmaker from Madaripur-1, was appointed by the president as the chief whip of the 11th JS.

The president also appointed six whips -- Atiur Rahman Atik from Sherpur-1; Panchanan Biswas from Khulna-1; Iqbalur Rahim from Dinajpur-3; Mahabub Ara Begum Gini from Gaibandha-2, Shamsul Hoque Chowdhury from Chattogram-12 and Abu Sayeed Al Mahmood Swapon from Jaipurhat-2.

The parliament secretariat issued separate gazette notifications in this regard.

Atiur and Rahim had served as whips in the 10th parliament.

President calls for nat'l unity

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"The government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was formed for the fourth time. The people's verdict is the reflection of an unwavering support to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's popular election manifesto -- Samridhdhir Agrajatrai Bangladesh [Bangladesh in pursuit of prosperity]. The government is determined to implement the pledges made in the election manifesto. Everyone will have to work together to face the challenges in the implementation of these commitments," he said.

The government's all-out efforts continued to strengthen and uphold the rule of law, Hamid told parliament.

"The Anti-Corruption Commission has been strengthened

to establish good governance while the National Human Rights Commission and the Information Commission have been set up. The rule of law has been established by abolishing the infamous indemnity law. Verdicts in the Bangabandhu murder and war crimes cases have been executed."

He said the government has been able to maintain a sustainable growth in all economic indexes. "A GDP growth rate of above 7 percent has been achieved since the 2015-16 fiscal year. According to the final estimate, the GDP rate in 2017-18 fiscal year was 7.78 percent. Bangladesh's economy is the 33rd in the world in terms of purchasing power parity while 41st on the basis of GDP size."

Hamid said the per capita income

now stood at \$1,751; foreign reserve crossed \$32 billion mark and the inflation rate dropped to 5.4 percent.

He also mentioned that the size of the national budget and revenue collection has increased manifold over the years. "We are successfully implementing many large projects, including construction of the Padma Bridge and flyovers, with our own fund by increasing revenue collection."

Employment opportunities have been created at home and abroad over the last 10 years. During this period, some 1.34 crore people were employed in the country while around 80 lakh abroad, said the president.

He said 34.82 lakh Bangladeshis went abroad with jobs in last five

years.

The government has been implementing a five-year health, population and nutrition development programme at a cost of Tk 115,486 crore to ensure healthcare, said Hamid.

The government's "zero tolerance" policy against drug abuse, militancy and extremism has been praised worldwide, he mentioned.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was present during the president's speech at the House, with newly-re-elected Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury in the chair.

Though Leader of the Opposition HM Ershad was absent as he was undergoing treatment abroad, Opposition Deputy Leader GM Quader was present.

Crescent group boss arrested

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Hossain Bhuiyan at a briefing at his office yesterday.

He made the comments after a meeting of a taskforce formed to prevent smuggling.

Apart from MA Kader, the CIID filed cases under the Money Laundering Prevention Act, 2012 against 16 others -- including Managing Director of Crescent Leather and Crescent Tanneries Sultana Begum, Rimex Footwear Chairman Abdul Aziz, its managing director Litul Jahan Mira and 13 present and former officials of Janata Bank -- with Chawkbazar Police Station.

The 13 bank officials against whom the cases were filed includes Mohammad Fakhru Alam, who was general manager of Janata Bank during the time of the scam and is now deputy managing director of Bangladesh Krishi Bank; Md Zakir Hossain, who was also general manager of Janata at that time, and is deputy managing director of Sonali Bank; Rezaul Karim, the general manager of Janata Bank, and its deputy general managers-- Kazi Rois Uddin Ahmed, AKM Asaduzzaman and Md

Iqbal; currently suspended assistant general manager Aatur Rahman Sarkar, suspended senior principal officers Khairul Amin and Mogreb Ali; suspended principal officer Muhammad Ruhul Amin; and suspended senior officers Saiduzzaman, Abdullah Al Mamun and Moniruzzaman.

NBR Chairman Mosharraf said the CIID found evidence of money laundering by the firms in an inquiry. He said the NBR would be careful so that no innocent persons are charged.

"I have given instruction to give charge sheet against those who are directly involved in the laundering," he said.

Citing reports of Washington based firm Global Financial Integrity about the illicit transfer of US\$ 5.9 billion through trade misinvoicing, Mosharraf said the money laundering cases filed against the firms are "trade-based".

"There is no doubt that money laundering is taking place," he said, adding that the NBR has information on 10-12 money laundering related cases and it would take legal action after holding a meeting expected to

take place in the first week of next month.

"They are going out of the country by being siphoned off and sometimes it is found that money in the banks are looted. So we want to send them a strong message."

Apart from the CIID, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) also found proof of embezzlement of Tk 1,303.69 crore by the Crescent Group from the Janata bank branch, according to the findings of an ongoing ACC inquiry initiated in October last year.

However, ACC is yet to file any cases in this regard.

The developments came after a Bangladesh Bank report revealed last year that the business entity "skimmed" at least Tk 765 crore in the name of exports from the JB and the Bangladesh Bank (BB) between January 2017 and February 2018.

The total amount of loans taken by the Crescent Group from the JB stood at Tk 3,443 crore in October last year, and the borrower defaulted on the loan, forcing the state-owned bank to call for an auction to recover the money.

Responding to a question on inquiry by several agencies and filing of cases on the same incident, Mosharraf said any agency related to prevention of money-laundering could file cases.

For now, it would be determined whether further investigation would be conducted individually or jointly, he added.

"But I think a joint probe is better," he said.

Mosharraf, responding to a question on the NBR's previous move on hiring an international firm to gather information on siphoned off money, said discussions had been conducted with several firms but they were exploring ways on how an international firm would be hired.

Five held

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charges of raping a seventh grader.

Sub-inspector Jahangir Alam of Sreepur Police Station said a girl filed the case with Sreepur Police Station on Tuesday.

The arrestees were sent to jail yesterday.

Force Myanmar to take back Rohingyas

Hasina renews call on int'l community

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday renewed her call to the international community to force Myanmar to take back its over one million Rohingya nationals from Bangladesh.

"Myanmar must take back its nationals and the international community should help Bangladesh send back the Rohingyas," she said.

The PM made the comments when visiting Deputy Foreign Minister of Vietnam Nguyen Quoc Dzung, also special envoy to the Vietnam prime minister, met her at the Gono Bhavan.

PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim briefed reporters after the meeting.

He said the PM mentioned that Bangladesh has prepared a temporary shelter for the Rohingyas at Bhashan Char to provide them with a better living place.

Hasina said Bangladesh and Myanmar have already signed

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Oikyafront fully united

Says Dr Kamal

UNB, Dhaka

Jatiya Oikyafront Convener Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday said the alliance is fully united.

He, however, did not say whether his party's (Gonoforum's) two MPs-elect will join parliament.

"Our Jatiya Oikyafront is cent percent united. Our unity is forged with the country's 16 crore people," he said.

He came up with the remarks while addressing a preparatory meeting of the Gonoforum for its 5th national council at the party's Arambagh central office.

"I visited many places and found our alliance's unity intact and it'll be consolidated in the days to come."

The Oikyafront chief said people now believe they are the owners of the country and its resources.

He called upon all to organise and remain alert so that no one can embezzle or waste the country's resources.

"We must remain aware of evil and anti-people forces who want to misappropriate our assets."

Dr Kamal said a national unity can protect people's interests and their ownership of the state.

Asked about the maiden session of the 11th parliament, the Oikyafront convener said they will come up with their statement on the issue later.

Asked whether Gonoforum's two MPs-elect will take oath, he said, "It's not the right issue to discuss here. We'll talk about the issue later at a press conference. Now we're talking about giving the national unity an institutional shape."

Dr Kamal called upon people to get organised across the country so that Oikyafront can play an effective role in protecting the national interests.

Gonoforum's fifth council will be held on March 23 and 24 in the capital.

Ex-MP's son

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had given judicial statements before magistrates.

Witnesses said rickshaw-puller Abdul Hakim and three-wheeler driver Yakub were shot by him.

Moreover, ballistics test confirmed that the bullet found in the body of auto-rickshaw driver Yakub was fired from Rony's gun.

The licence of the firearm was not submitted before the court and how many bullets were in the pistol was not mentioned. But police recovered 21 bullets from the convict, the judge said.

The verdict came after the court examined 24 prosecution witnesses. Rony remained calm after hearing the verdict and did not comment about it.

The complainant or family members of the victims were not present on the court premises.

Additional Prosecutor SM Zahid Hossain expressed his satisfaction over the verdict as the defence lawyer said they would appeal against the verdict with the High Court.

According to the charges pressed against him, Rony fired random shots from his vehicle "being frustrated over post-midnight traffic" leaving two people dead.

Victim Abdul Hakim's mother Monowara Begum filed the murder case on April 15, 2015.

The incident didn't draw much attention at first. But as the media ran reports, it created a huge public outcry.

Ramna police started a probe and collected CCTV footage installed at the nearby Janakantha office. In the footage, they found suspicious movement of a black SUV in the area.

Later, police identified the vehicle owner with the help of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority.

Rony was remanded thrice. But he didn't confess to his crimes.

The case was then transferred to the Detective Branch of police on May 25. Rony was arrested on May 31.