

BNP leaders' money in Swiss banks

PM hints at parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday hinted that BNP leaders deposited money in Swiss banks, which was collected through nomination business ahead of the December 30 national election. "There is information that the BNP nominated 692 candidates in 300 seats in the December 30 election. More than two candidates were nominated for each constituency," the PM told parliament. Responding to a proposal by BNP lawmaker Rumeen Farhana for eliciting public opinion on the finance bill, Hasina said, "Where did they deposit the money collected from nomination business? You will get an idea from the statistics of Swiss bank accounts if you look into the matter." The PM made the reply on behalf of ailing Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal. She also had placed the Finance Bill, 2019 in the House. Earlier, the finance minister sought Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury's permission to allow the PM to respond to lawmakers' proposals on eliciting public opinion on the finance bill and other amendments to the bill. Hasina's comments came at a



Locals gather as a crane pulls out a carriage from a canal in Moulvibazar's Kulaura yesterday morning. Six carriages of the Upaban Express derailed last Sunday leaving four people dead and scores injured. PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

Canada faces pressure to act against Myanmar

ROHINGYA GENOCIDE

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Canada is facing mounting pressure from senators, and members of the civil society and rights groups from across the country to take more international action in holding Myanmar accountable for the Rohingya genocide, reports The Canadian Press. Thirty-four senators -- a third of the Senate -- and more than 100 human rights organisations and advocates sent a joint letter to Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland this week urging Canada to initiate proceedings before the International Court of Justice over the breaching of the United Nations convention against genocide. In September 2018, Canada became the first country in the world to officially recognise the violence against the Rohingya by Myanmar's security forces as 'genocide'. Canada also stripped Myanmar's de facto leader Aung Sun Suu Kyi of her honorary Canadian citizenship for her inaction over the issue. But branding the situation a genocide carries with it a legal and international obligation to intervene, potentially with force, which is why the push is now on to see Canada take this next step, the joint letter states. "As concerned parliamentarians and members of the civil society, we strongly believe that those

Threat not big, worry still there

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The April 21 bombings in Sri Lanka came at a time when IS had fully been defeated in Syrian battlegrounds, added Ashraf, a teacher at Dhaka University international relations department. CTC unit chief Monirul Islam said they have taken cautionary steps at airports and entry points to ensure none of those fighters can enter without being arrested. "We have also taken steps to ensure that people who are coming from the different countries, specially from Iraq or Saudi Arabia, are carrying proper travel documents," he told The Daily Star on Thursday. Officials identified all those who had gone to Syria directly from Bangladesh as FTFs. They also got several lists of Bangladesh-origin FTFs from different other parts of the world, including Europe and America, he added. Even amid the heightened watch, a Bangladesh-origin FTF managed to enter Bangladesh on February 1 dodging the surveillance at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka. The Syria returnee, Saudi expatriate Motaj Abdul Majid Kafiluddin Bepari alias Motaj, was arrested on May 5 in the capital, around three months after his entry. PRESENT STATE OF MILITANT OUTFITS CTC chief Monirul says the terrorist groups have no organisational strength now to plan a big attack. "The terrorist groups can conduct small operations if they get the chance." He added, "The Neo JMB that follows IS ideology now has no charismatic leaders, hardcore activists, financiers, planners, organisers or motivators. The group also does not have the supply of arms and ammunition." About the alarm bell being rung by the government and police high-ups, he said they want to remain alert analysing the global trends so that militants cannot get the opportunity to carry out even small attacks. Though the terror group's leaders and activists were killed in pre-emptive drives one after another since the café attack, it again managed to stockpile explosives in its dens in different areas till 2017. But those were dismantled in successful raids, said Monirul. According to the official database, at least 78 leaders and supporters of the outfit were killed in different anti-militancy drives of law enforcers in the last two years. And nearly 250 people were also arrested by the law enforcers for their involvement in militancy during the period. Right now, the militant outfit has some 12 to 14 active trained members who have come to leadership position from third or fourth tier. Three to four persons are leading small groups trying to reorganise it and recruiting sympathisers through cyberspace, the CTC unit chief said. "Cyberspace became a major platform to draw people to militancy... We don't conduct any sting operation directly, but we follow people who show interest in militancy in cyberspace, and try to neutralise them. "We bring them out from cyberspace, provide them counselling and finally hand them over to their guardians." Monir said those who get attracted to radicalism online are mostly young and under 18. Before Neo JMB, Ansar Al Islam received most attention of counterterrorism officials between 2013 and 2016. At least a dozen writers, blogger and online activists were killed by the outfit. Monirul said activists of this outfit, who were involved in killings, have either been arrested or exposed. Earlier known as Ansarullah Bangla Team, it is now mainly active on cyberspace and provoking radicals to carry out attacks. "But, analysing their targeting policy, we do not think the outfit poses any terror threat now." About Harkat-ul Jihad al Islami, CTC officials said the outfit organisationally collapsed back in 2009 but it is again trying to regroup using Cox's Bazar Rohingya camps and trying to recruit the camp people. The mainstream Jamat-ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), they said, is busy in robbery, dacoity and petty crimes to collect funds. Monirul said they do not think that there is any threat from this outfit as many of their leaders have either been arrested and executed. Asked about another radical group Hizb-ut Tahrir, he said members of the organisation believe that they don't have to directly take part in "jihad". "It believes that it has supporters in the administration and they will establish Caliphate through a coup after gathering massive support from all stages." "But," he added, "We have been able to thwart or prevent the recruitment process of the militant organisation. So, we do not think there is any threat from it."

Local AL leaders accuse each other

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Two other suspects, Rifat Farjee, and Risan Farjee, are nephews of Delwar Hossain, also the chairman of Barguna district council. They are supporters of Delwar's group, according to locals and the rivals of the AL leader. Asked, Delwar said, "It's true that the two are my relatives, but they are followers of local MP Dharendra Debnath Shambhu. I have no connection with them ... "I demand capital punishment for the killers." According to Delwar, Nayan also worked as a police informer. Contacted, Md Maruf Hossain, superintendent of police in the district, rejected the allegation and said police arrested him on several occasions in the past. Rifat Sharif, 25, came under attack in front of his wife Ayesha Siddika Minni near Barguna Government College on June 26. Later that night, the victim's father filed a murder case against 12. On Friday evening, a Barguna court granted a 7-day remand for each of two accused in the case, Chandon and Hasan, while a 2-day remand for another accused, Najmul Hasan. Later that night, police arrested Saimun, 22, a close friend of one of the accused Rabbi Akon, in Patuakhali town. With him, a total of four accused have been arrested over the murder, said law enforcers. But the main suspects, including Nayan and Rifat Farjee, are still at large. Meanwhile, the authorities have directed Benapole border officials to remain on high alert so that Rifat's killers cannot cross the border and escape arrest. Talking to this newspaper, Abul Bashar, OC of Benapole immigration check post, said passports and other documents of everyone crossing the border was being checked thoroughly. 'CULTURE OF IMPUNITY' Meanwhile, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Chairman Kazi Reazul Hoque yesterday said the ongoing culture of impunity and lengthy judicial proceedings were the reasons behind some recent murders. Those who attended the protest programme included district AL Joint Secretary Kamrul Ahsan Maharaj, BCL district unit President Jubayer Adnan Anik, and Barguna Nagorik Odhikar Sanrankhkhon Committee General Secretary Monir Hossain Kamal. At a press briefing around 2:30pm, Barguna SP Maruf Hossain said they hope to arrest the rest of the accused within a day or two. SECURITY FOR VICTIM'S FAMILY Authorities deployed police personnel in front of the house of Minni, Rifat's wife, on Thursday night as the family members were in fear of further attack. "Some people are threatening us even after the killing. We informed the matter to the police after which they are here," Minni's father Mozammel Hossain Kishor told The Daily Star. 'IT'S PROPAGANDA' Meanwhile, Minni once again brushed aside an allegation that she had married Nayan in the past. "Some people are spreading propaganda against me about my marriage. Once Nayan had taken me [to a place] and forcibly took my signature on a paper. I did not understand it was a 'Kabin' [marriage document]," she said while talking to reporters at her home yesterday. [Our Patuakhali, Barishal and Benapole correspondents contributed to this report]

Most lacking

FROM PAGE 1 The government of Bangladesh and United States Agency for International Development funded the survey while ICE, USA provided technical assistance. BFHS also finds that four out of every five upazila health complexes do not have functioning x-ray machines. On the other hand, up to a fifth of the district hospitals do not have working x-ray machines, it said. When asked to comment on the absence of basic equipment, Abul Kamal Azad, Director General of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), said, "It is unbelievable. I have to see the report." It is also not believable that the x-ray machines are out of order in the upazila health complexes, he added last week. But the line director of DGHS said something different. Dr Satyakam Chararaborty, line director (Hospital Service Management) of DGHS, admitted to The Daily Star that there is a crisis of functioning x-ray machines. "We received a financial allocation to purchase x-ray machines and will complete the purchase soon. Besides, we have a dearth of manpower to operate the x-ray machines as well. Appointing technicians is also under way," he said. Last week Our Natore correspondent visited the Bagatipara Upazila Health Centre in the district on May 23 and found no thermometer or weighing machine for adults. The health care centre has x-ray and ECG machines, but both were out of order. Contacted, Dr Mohammad Rasel, residential medical officer of the hospital, said they have already informed the authorities that the machines are out of order. He, however, claimed the weighing machine was in the emergency department. On the absence of thermometers, Dr Rasel said, "We have to buy thermometers on a regular basis as the glass variety is fragile and it often breaks." The BFHS also reviewed six basic amenities -- electricity, water connection, patients' privacy during consultation, visitors' latrine, phone connection, and computer with internet access -- considered essential for health services. The survey found that almost four-fifths of the district and upazila health facilities and NGO-facilities have regular power, while all private hospitals have regular electricity. Only two out of five community clinics, however, have regular electricity. A total of 90 percent of all the hospitals and clinics have water connections on the premises, it said. On privacy, the survey said seven out of 10 health care facilities provide privacy for clients during consultation which is almost 100 percent in the case of private and NGO facilities. It also found that a total of 79 percent of the health care facilities have toilets for visitors. On the other hand, only 17 percent of the facilities have separate and improved latrines for women and girls. The survey said some 11 percent of the health care facilities have land phones or official mobile phone numbers. Ambulances are available in only five percent of all facilities; but if the community clinics are excluded, the figure comes up to 15 percent. The capacity of the health facilities to conduct basic diagnostic tests is still very limited. The most widely available test is blood glucose, which only 20 percent provide. Only 4 percent offer all five basic diagnostic tests (haemoglobin, blood glucose, urine protein, urine glucose, and urine pregnancy test), said the survey.

Busy days

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being batted out of the game as they were done by the two other strong contenders for the title -- Australia and England. He had in the past expressed relief after losing the toss. Would it be better to lose the toss this time too? "Maybe," Mashrafe mused as the deluge of Indian fans swept past. He was wondering what score would be enough to win against the strong Indian lineup if they did bat first. 340 seemed to be the number. But for that, they would have to see the wicket, and Mashrafe did not yet know which strip they would use for the match. Such were the worries and conflicts that constitute the mind of a captain heading into what may become a sudden-death match against the strongest team of the tournament. It could be said that Bangladesh, ranked eighth, had done enough by staying alive this deep into the tournament and impressing all and sundry with their performance in hostile conditions. "To tell you the truth, none of my team are satisfied with what we have done so far. We have played well, but while it would surprise many outsiders if we reached the semis, I can say for sure that no one in the team would be surprised," Mashrafe said. Having played their last match against Afghanistan on June 24, many Bangladesh players were away in various places of the UK on vacation. Mashrafe and opener Tamim Iqbal were among those who came back on Friday. Others joined the team yesterday and today Bangladesh are set to undergo a practice session to prepare for the crucial World Cup encounter. There will be much for the team to finalise over the next two days.

No scope to invest in land

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protect interest of small investors. Some businesses objected to this, she said. "We also have to consider interest of small investors apart from the concerns of big businesses and entrepreneurs. Investors also expect dividend by investing in the capital market," she said, placing proposals for changes in the budget. Listed companies will have to pay cash dividend equal to the ratio of stock dividend. If the ratio of stock dividend is higher than the cash dividend, the company will have to pay 10 percent tax on stock dividend. The House also passed the proposal that listed companies would give 30 percent of its net profit as stock and cash dividend. If any company fails to do so, it will have to pay 10 percent tax on retained earnings and reserves. In the budget proposal, the government sought to slap 15 percent tax on the retained earnings and reserves of a company if the amount exceeds 50 percent of the paid-up capital. It also said stock dividend by listed companies will be subject to 15 percent tax. Parliament also passed proposal to impose specific tax at Tk 4 for each kilogram of yarns used by weavers instead of previously proposed 5 percent VAT. It also approved the proposal to rationalise import duty on papers that are not produced by domestic mills. Placing the proposed changes, Hasina said Bangladesh was advancing to attain the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and to become a developed country by 2041. "This budget will take us forward. Bangladesh is advancing and will advance," she said. The finance minister did not propose any changes but said the budget was prepared in a way that its impact would reach as far as 2041. "We have included such areas that they will give benefit for a long time." Kamal was also upbeat about accelerated GDP growth. "Our GDP growth will of course be double digit by 2024," he said, expecting that the economy would grow by 10 percent annually from 2024 to 2030 and onward. Bangladesh will not borrow from anywhere by that time, said Kamal, who placed his maiden budget this year. "We have a debt-GDP ratio less than 34 percent and we borrow from China By 2030, we will not borrow any more. We will lend," he said. In his speech in the House, Kamal said he was yet to recover from illness. He could not also place the budget proposal because of fever. So for the first time in the history of the country, the PM had to place both the budget as well as the changes in the budget measures.