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## Case records go missing from court

Finger pointed at a driver; 4 trials stall; record room security questioned

EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

Records and documents of four narcotics cases have gone missing about 10 months ago from a Dhaka court, raising questions about the security measures at the record room.

The cases, filed over the last seven to 21 years, are pending with the Special Judge's Court 2 of Dhaka. But trial proceedings have remained halted since the discovery of the potential breach of the sensitive room.

Mohammad Ashek Ali, the court's bench assistant, said he found the documents missing days after he joined the court on January 12. He has since been looking for the documents with no success.

On June 5, he informed Judge Abu Saleh Mohammad Ruhul Imran of the matter in writing. The judge could not take any action as his last working day at the court was on June 8, the day he received Ashek's application for investigation.

Later that month, Ashek wrote to the registrar of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court, requesting a probe.

In the letter, he named Mohammad Rasel, the driver of the then judge Abu Saleh, as a suspect.

According to the letter, Rasel has been working at the court for around 14 years. He would "search files"

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BNP lawmakers walking out of the parliament after submitting their resignation letter to the Speaker yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## BNP MPs tender their resignations

6 seats declared vacant

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five out of the seven BNP MPs submitted their resignations in person to Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury yesterday as part of their party's anti-government movement.

The MPs who resigned in person are Md Zahidur Rahman of Thakurgaon-3, Md Mosharof Hosen of Bogura-4, Gulam Mohammad Siraj of Bogura-6, Md Aminul Islam of Chapainawabganj-2, and Rumeen Farhana, from women's reserved seats.

Md Harunur Rashid of Chapainawabganj-3, who is now in Australia, and Abdu Sattar Buiyan, the ailing MP of Brahmanbaria-2, could not tender their resignations in person yesterday, and did it through email.

In the afternoon, the Parliament Secretariat

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## BUSINESS

### BB to help tame market in Ramadan

The central bank has asked banks to take a minimum cash advance from importers while opening letters of credit (LCs) for essential commodities as it looks to keep their prices at a tolerable level during Ramadan.

The advance payment, also known as the cash LC margin, should be kept at the minimum level depending on the bank-client relationship, said the Bangladesh Bank in a notice yesterday.

Importers of eight items – edible oil, gram, lentil, onion, sugar, peas, spices and dates – will be extended the import facility with a minimum LC margin.

STORY ON B1

## BNP believes rallies proved its strength

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

After holding a series of rallies over the past two and half months, the BNP believes it has been able to change the perception that the party is not strong or organised enough to mobilise people.

The rallies, in which droves of people joined despite many obstacles, showed that when political parties take to the streets over issues of public interest, the programmes succeed.

Another upshot for the BNP is that the peaceful rallies gained considerable global attention this time, according to its leaders.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, BNP Standing Committee member Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku, said, "The events prove the BNP is organisationally strong enough to hold rallies defying the odds, and can launch a movement even within a short time."

The rallies also prove that the party believes in peaceful movement and it is the ruling Awami League that resorts to violence and blames the opposition, he said.

"Tens of thousands of leaders, activists, and the general public joined those rallies, which were held in a peaceful and disciplined manner."

BNP activists have gained confidence by overcoming

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## Hasina won't bow to any external pressure

Say Momen, Shahriar

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will not cave in to "any external pressure or internal conspiracy to derail the nation", said Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and his deputy Shahriar Alam yesterday.

They said the government is determined to hold the next general election in a free, fair and transparent manner under an independent Election Commission.

They made the remarks at a seminar titled "Promotion and Protection of Human Rights: Bangladesh Perspectives," organised by the foreign ministry at the Foreign Service Academy in the capital, marking the International Human Rights Day.

Foreign diplomats including US Ambassador Peter Haas, UK High Commissioner Robert Chatterton Dickson, EU Ambassador Charles Whiteley, Sweden Ambassador Alex Berg von Linde and the Maldives High Commissioner Shiruzimath Sameer, among others, were

present at the event.

The ministers noted the joint statement issued by 15 diplomatic missions on December 7 reaffirming the importance of a free, fair, inclusive and peaceful electoral process in Bangladesh.

Momen said Bangladesh saw a phenomenal rise in militant activities and violence during the BNP Jamaat rule, and that dozens of AL leaders and activists were killed and injured in a grenade attack in 2004.

He said the AL government made significant socio-economic strides over the last decade, while militancy has notably declined.

Momen said there could be some weaknesses in terms of human rights and democratic practices, and that no country, including the US, was without drawbacks. Therefore, he said, instead of naming and shaming, cooperation and collaboration were needed to improve the situation.



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## AL unfazed by BNP's 10-point demand

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

The Awami League seems unruffled by the BNP's 10-point demand announced at Saturday's rally.

The ruling party sees no issue that could be a cause for concern in the days to come, AL insiders said.

The party leaders believe the "bubble of the BNP's much-hyped divisional rallies had burst as it came up with the same old demands".

The AL, however, had been "worried" about the BNP's December 10 rally as it was somewhat clueless about what the opposition party would do. And the ruling party felt relieved as there was no unexpected situation centring the rally.

It now wants to fully concentrate on its campaign for the next national polls, slated for January 2024, and expand its alliance by bringing in like-minded parties, said party insiders.

"The Speaker's acceptance of resignations of the BNP MPs and declaration that the parliamentary seats are vacant proved that the government is not taking the BNP's demands seriously," a

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## DESERT FEST

A World Cup too cruel, too beautiful



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NABID YEASIN

When Cristiano Ronaldo walked down the tunnel in tears at the Al Thumama Stadium on Saturday, it must have felt surreal for millions of his and Portugal fans around the globe.

Seeing someone like Ronaldo, who had made a trademark of proving

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Croatia's inspirational midfielder and captain Luka Modric is all smiles during a training session yesterday ahead of their blockbuster World Cup semifinal against Argentina on Tuesday night. It is a match sure to be billed as Modric vs Messi as the former Ballon d'Or winners look to lead from the front for their respective sides.

PHOTO: AFP

## Atlas Lions get Arab world and beyond to rally behind them

ATIQUE ANAM from Doha

As the World Cup advances towards its climax, there has been a constant exodus of fans from countries which have already been eliminated. The metros are not as busy as they used to be even a couple of days ago, with some heavyweights and fan-favourite teams like Brazil and Portugal biting the dust.

One of the four that have stood the test of skill and character so far are Morocco – the only Arab and African country to reach the semi-finals in the history of the World Cup. The Moroccans have defied all odds, exceeded all expectations and continued to slay giants, one after another.

With the team far exceeding expectations and instilling belief among their fans that they can go all the way, there has been a scramble for flights to Doha from Rabat over the last few days. Some of the Moroccans had been here since the beginning of the World Cup, but a large number of them have descended on this land over the last few days as the Atlas Lions – whose previous best record was a Round of 16 appearance way back in 1986 – stunned favourites like Belgium, Spain and Portugal on their way to the final four.

Aliya Abdelkarim, a woman in her thirties from Rabat, was revelling with a group of fans at Dohatown Doha after watching her team beat Portugal at the Al Thumama Stadium a couple of hours earlier. There were a few hundred Moroccan fans who gathered there, many

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