



Legal issues delaying Tarique's repatriation

Hasina tells parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some legal issues were delaying the process of bringing home BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman from the UK, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told parliament yesterday.

Tarique has been convicted in multiple cases, including the August 21 grenade attack case.

The government is determined to bring the BNP leader back home after resolving all pending legal issues to make him face the punishment, Hasina said in response to a query from Farida Yasmin, an Awami League lawmaker from a reserved seat for women.

The questions to the PM and her answers were tabled in the House, with Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury in the chair.

The premier said strong diplomatic and legal initiatives have been taken to bring Tarique back home.

A total of 15 convicts in the August 21 grenade attack case, including Tarique, are absconding.

Hasina, also the Leader of the House, said an Interpol red notice was issued against the absconding convicts, including Maulana Tajuddin, Md Harish Chaudhary and Ratul Ahmed Babu.

She informed parliament that she sent several letters to the heads of state and governments of the countries concerned at different times seeking cooperation from them in bringing the murderers back home.

The PM said she raised the issue with some government leaders at international forums.

Hasina, however, said the progress in bringing the convicts back home has not been satisfactory.

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An array of solar panels at the Sirajganj 68MW Solar Park in Soyadabad near Bangabandhu Bridge. A total of 1.56 lakh solar panels have been set up there. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Another solar farm to go online in days

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, *Pabna*

Commercial operation of another solar power plant may start on June 30 on the bank of Jamuna in Sirajganj.

The "Sirajganj 68MW Solar Park," which was financed by Bangladesh and China companies, will be the 12th operational commercial solar plants in the country.

Eleven such plants now generate 536 megawatts of electricity, according to the national database of renewable energy.

When the Sirajganj plant supplies power to the national grid, the total production will be over 600 megawatts from renewable energy, said sources.

The solar park has been constructed in Soyadabad area near Bangabandhu Bridge at a cost of Tk 880 crore. Bangladesh and China Renewable Energy Company Ltd (BCRECL) and North-West Power Generation Company Ltd (NWPGL) funded the project, whose construction

work began on January 9, 2023.

Following power purchase and implementation agreements, NWPGL and China National Machinery Import and Export Corporation (CMC) started

been set up to produce 68MW of power. "We have already completed construction work of the plant. Now we are working for commissioning the plant," Tanvir said.

Line commissioning and other work for the commercial operation have successfully been completed, the PD said, adding that they are hopeful of starting the commercial operation on June 30.

"We will supply power to the national grid at a cost of Tk 11.20per unit," said Tanvir.

Talking to this correspondent, Khandakar Mokammel Hossain, a member of Bangladesh Power Development Board, said the government is determined to increase solar power generation.

"We are getting only 536 megawatts of power from renewable energy sources, but we want to get a significant amount of power from this sector. So, the government is patronising solar plants," he said.

"We have already completed construction work of the plant. Now we are working for commissioning the plant."
TANVIR RAHMAN,
project director

Professional bodies

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Nasim said that politicians do not take sides when allegations of corruption or misdeeds are raised against a fellow politician.

"Rather, they raise their voice for taking political and legal actions. That's the greatness of honest politicians. But whenever allegations of corruption are raised against a particular person of a government, private, or semi-government organisation or a law enforcement agency, a statement is issued in favour of that corrupt person," he said.

He said the associations concerned will have to get out of this practice.

The lawmaker from Dhaka-8 said initiatives should be taken to implement Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's zero-tolerance policy against corruption by taking strict actions against corrupt persons and institutions.

Talking about defaulted loans, Nasim said such loans should be reduced by taking strict measures against the defaulters.

He called for identifying the loan defaulters, money launderers, bank robbers, and those who hike prices of essentials.

"I think that preparing a list of those people and presenting the list before the nation are necessary."

The AL leader said the people should be protected from the corrupt persons by forming a special task force.

On June 21, Bangladesh Police Service Association (BPSA) issued a statement condemning what it termed a "smear campaign orchestrated by certain media outlets" against current and former members of police.

BPSA termed some recent media reports on retired and serving police officials "ill motivated, sweeping, and exaggerated". It also requested the media to be more cautious while publishing reports on the force.

The statement came at a time when the Anti-Corruption Commission is conducting an investigation into the allegations of accumulating huge illegal wealth by former inspector general of police Benazir Ahmed and his family members.

Former Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia also hogged the headlines recently over allegations of amassing illegal wealth.

Matiur Rahman, president of the National Board of Revenue's (NBR) Customs, Excise and VAT Appellate Tribunal, has been transferred to the Internal Resources Division of the finance ministry following a controversy over his wealth.

The ACC is investigating accusations of accumulating assets by Motiur at home and abroad through illegal means.

Foreign debt costs to spiral

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to rise to 2.6 percent in FY27 from 0.9 percent in FY22, reflecting a growing impact of external debt on the budget, the report mentioned.

It further said two major factors are contributing to the increase in interest payments for foreign loans.

One factor is that the reference rates in advanced countries are expected to stay high, and the other is that Bangladesh's graduation from the category of LDCs will gradually narrow the window for getting concessional loans from external sources.

A reference rate is an interest rate benchmark that is used to set other interest rates. The Fed Funds Rate, the Secured Overnight Financing Rate (SOFR), and the prime rate are among the most common reference rates.

The report said the implicit interest rate on external borrowing exhibits a gradual increase over the period - from 1 percent in FY21 to 2.6 percent in FY27.

"This increase is attributed to a higher proportion of borrowing through floating and semi-

concessional rates, which are more sensitive to market fluctuations compared to fixed-rate financing."

It also mentioned that the depreciation of the taka has elevated the value of external debt when measured in local currency terms.

This highlights the influence of currency fluctuations on the debt portfolio and the importance of managing external debt exposure in the face of exchange rate volatility.

Referring to the gradual increase in foreign loan repayments, the report said that managing these debt service obligations is essential for ensuring financial stability and preventing liquidity crises.

"Despite the increasing amounts of external debt repayment, they are expected to remain within tolerable limits, supported by the government's efforts to diversify funding sources and build up foreign exchange reserves," it added.

Talking to this newspaper, Ahsan H Mansur, executive director at the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh, said that given the ongoing forex crisis, Bangladesh has

to be judicious about taking loans and choose projects that are of high social and economic importance.

"Many of the investments were good, but many were not, which is why our debt burden is rising. The government's capacity to borrow is decreasing due to the inability to expand revenue growth in line with economic growth."

He said projects such as the Dhaka Metro Rail and even an underground rail line in Dhaka will be beneficial.

However, the huge spending on the train line to Cox's Bazar, the Padma Rail Line, and the nuclear power plant in Rooppur will not yield expected outcome. They will add to the burden of foreign debt repayment, he said.

According to the report, Bangladesh's foreign loans are mostly made up of five currencies. The US dollar remains predominant, constituting 53 percent of the total, followed by the Japanese yen at 20 percent, the euro at 15 percent, the Chinese renminbi at 8 percent, the British pound at 3 percent, and other currencies making up 1 percent of the debt.

Bangladeshi women being sold in China

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look for gullible Bangladeshi women, especially the ones from indigenous communities of the hill tracts, and get them to marry Chinese citizens.

"I often see parties at restaurants in Uttara where Chinese men meet women from the hill districts. Sometimes, I see them preparing marriage registration documents. Some locals are members of the gangs."

He had heard that the local arrangers get from Tk 10-Tk 20 lakh for each woman who agreed to fly to China.

The people accused in the case filed by Lovely's mother are Cui Po Wei; Ji Yixian, a woman who introduced herself to the family as Wei's sister; Abdullah Al Mamun of Bogura, Faruq and Abdul Mannan of Chuadanga; Solaiman of Kashimpur; and Hafizur Rahman Mollah, a marriage registrar from Jatrabari in the capital.

"The accused are organised human traffickers who took advantage of our helplessness... and trafficked my daughter to China for sexual exploitation and forced prostitution," reads the complaint.

The Criminal Investigation Department is investigating the case.

On May 1 in Rangamati, a Chakma woman filed a case with Naniarchar

Police Station, stating that a gang of traffickers held her sister captive at an unspecified place in the capital and may soon take her to China.

The complaint said the gang promised to admit the 21-year-old woman to a nursing institute and took her to Dhaka in a microbus. The gang later took indecent photos of her and forced her to marry a Chinese man.

A woman named Rika Chakma was accused in the case as the leader of the gang. Rika, who is from Khagrachhari's Dighinala upazila, lives in the capital's Uttara Sector-14. Seven named and four to five unidentified others were accused in the case.

On April 26, a 21-year-old Marma woman from Khagrachhari filed a case with Laxmichhari Police Station accusing five named and two or three unknown others of attempting to traffic her to China.

She was taken to a house in Uttara Sector-II and was compelled to marry a Chinese man. Luckily, locals rescued her and caught three of the gang members on April 25 when the men were taking her to a government office in Khagrachhari to get a document for her passport.

The CID is investigating both cases. In 2018, three women of indigenous

communities were brought back from China through diplomatic efforts.

Chandra Dewan, head teacher of Ghagra High School in Kawkhali, Rangamati, said that in the last few months at least three young women from the area were taken to China, and two schoolgirls were recently rescued from traffickers.

Gautam Dewan, president of CHT Citizens Committee, urged the government to ensure that there is monitoring so that underprivileged women are saved from falling victim to human traffickers.

Noor E Alam Mina, deputy inspector general of Chattogram range police, said police were looking into the matter.

The Chinese embassy in Bangladesh in an email said the Chinese government protects the rights and interests of women and children and cracks down on human trafficking. Besides, the embassy is committed to safeguard the rights and interests of the Chinese citizens in Bangladesh.

Regarding Lovely's case, it said the embassy has not received any notification from the Bangladesh government.

[Our Rangamati correspondent Laltanlian Pangkhua contributed to this report.]

Principal secy's tenure extended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday extended the contract of Tofazzel Hossain Miah, the principal secretary to the prime minister, by another year.

The contractual appointment will be effective from July 5, according to a gazette notification from the ministry of public administration.

The government appointed Miah on a year's contract when his regular service age expired on July 4 last year. The contract expires on July 4 this year.

Meanwhile, the government also extended the tenure of service of ABM Amin Ullah Nuri, secretary of road transport and highways division, for another year.

Nuri has been reappointed on a contractual basis in continuation of his previous contract with the government and under the same conditions from July 1 or the day of his joining the office, according to a public administration order yesterday.

In another notification, additional secretary Gautam Chandra Pal was appointed the chairman of the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority. Pal is currently serving as the personal secretary to Obaidul Quader, the minister of road transport and bridges.

Postal officials embezzled Tk 55cr: Palak

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Postal officials have embezzled Tk 55 crore from people and the department, Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister for posts, telecommunications, and information technology, said yesterday.

"We have found that Tk 55 crore was misappropriated by postal officials nationwide, and I have already written to the ACC chairman, urging him to take action," he said.

Most of the fraudulent activities involve postal officials embezzling people's deposits without issuing official documentation for the purchase of government savings certificates.

The state minister made the remarks while speaking to reporters after a workshop jointly organised by a2i (Aspire to Innovate) platform of Information and Communication Technology Division, and the International Telecommunication Union at a city hotel.

Palak said they recently noticed the financial irregularities at post offices when a woman of Rajshahi's Tanore attempted to commit suicide after failing to recover Tk 2 lakh from the local postmaster.

The official did not provide her with any official documents even though she bought savings certificates, he added.

IMF for stronger asset

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in order to receive the remaining instalments of the IMF's \$4.7 billion loan.

The advice comes hard on the heels of revelations of financial felonies of unprecedented scale involving a number of former and incumbent senior government officials.

The amassing of huge wealth by former inspector general of police Benazir Ahmed has particularly taken the nation by surprise.

"To combat high-level corruption effectively, it is essential to reinforce the asset declaration process for public officials by enforcing sanctions for non-compliance and adopting a standardised approach for the usage and regular updating of the declarations," said the IMF.

According to the document, the government told the IMF that it remained committed to strengthening governance and combatting corruption.

2 more suspects held

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"We are bringing to book only those against whom there is clear evidence. No innocent person will be arrested and no one will get a guilty individual released."

Yesterday morning, detectives with the help of divers and fishermen with nets looked in two ponds of Jhenaidah town for three phones with which Kazi Kamal Ahmed Babu, relief and social welfare affairs secretary of the Jhenaidah Awami League, contacted the assailants, officials said.

Babu earlier told officers that he

threw the phones into two ponds to destroy evidence. On June 25, police took Babu to Jhenaidah jail from Kashimpur jail in Gazipur to find the phones.

Police called off the search for the day after two hours.

DB chief Harun told reporters in the town that some valuable information was on the phones.

Slain lawmaker Azim went to Kolkata on May 12, and on May 22, India and Bangladesh police said he was murdered.

[Our Jhenaidah correspondent contributed to this report.]



A plume of smoke billows during Israeli bombardment on the village of Khiam in south Lebanon near the border with Israel yesterday, amid ongoing cross-border tensions.

PHOTO: AFP