

## Former chief whip Hasanat Abdullah's son placed on remand

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed Serniabat Moinuddin Ahmed, son of former chief whip Abul Hasanat Abdullah, on five-day remand in a case over the death of Jubo Dal leader Shamim Mia in the capital's Paltan on October 28 last year.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Ragib Noor passed the order after investigation officer Tonmoy Kumar Biswas, a sub-inspector of Paltan Model Police Station, produced him before the court with a 10-day remand prayer.

Moinuddin, whose father is a cousin of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, was shown arrested in the case after the IO had submitted an application in this regard. His name was not included in the first information report (FIR).

In the remand prayer, the IO said

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Bangladesh Army Chief General Waker-uz-Zaman met Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at the State Guest House Jamuna yesterday when he briefed Yunus about his recent visit to the United States and Canada.

PHOTO: PTD

## Decision on traditional Kundubari Fair today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Shariatpur

The decision to hold the 250-year-old traditional Kundubari Fair in Madaripur's Kalkini upazila will be decided at a meeting today.

Initially, the Shariatpur district administration decided to cancel the fair due to protests from a group of locals. However, the announcement to cancel the fair sparked significant backlash on social media.

The week-long fair was scheduled to commence on October 31 in Bhurghata village, coinciding with the Kali Puja festivities. The fair, named after the Kundu clan, is organised on the premises of Kundubari temple.

On October 16, about a dozen locals submitted a written request to the Kalkini upazila nirbahi officer, urging the cancellation of the fair due to alleged "anti-social activities" associated with it, according to local sources and officials.

On October 22, the Kalkini upazila administration decided to halt the fair, as confirmed by UNO Utthom Kumar Das.

"Some locals approached me on October 16, requesting to stop the fair, although I am not aware of their political affiliations," he stated.

"Subsequently, we convened a meeting with the local residents. On October 22, we made a preliminary decision to cancel the fair to prevent any potential violence or undesirable incidents," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

## Iran says

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the border yesterday.

Confirming its own strikes after explosions and anti-aircraft fire echoed around Tehran, the Israeli military said it had hit Iranian missile factories and military facilities in several regions.

The "retaliatory strike has been completed and the mission was fulfilled", while Israeli aircraft "returned safely", a military spokesman added.

Iran confirmed Israel had targeted military sites in Tehran province around the capital and other parts of the country, saying the raids caused "limited damage" but killed two soldiers. **DIRECT ATTACK** Israel had vowed to retaliate after October 1, when Iran fired around 200 missiles in only the second-ever direct attack against its arch-foe. Most of those missiles were intercepted, but one person was killed.

The Israeli retaliation drew condemnation from Hamas, Iraq, Pakistan, Syria, and Saudi Arabia, which warned against further escalation. Jordan stated that Israeli jets had not used its airspace. Turkey was one of the most outspoken critics, calling for an end to "terror created by Israel".

## US court stays

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The development comes a day after US District Judge Carl J Nichols had issued "bench warrants for the arrest" of Salehuddin and Ahsan, whom a power company wants to testify, as it seeks to enforce a collective \$31.9 million in arbitration awards against Bangladesh.

The judge directed the US Marshals Service to detain the two as they were visiting Washington to attend the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank Group, held on October 21-26.

The court had ordered the clerk to issue the warrants as a contempt sanction against Bangladesh.

"The US court had no jurisdiction to issue such arrest warrants for these officials. However, through the stay order of the court, the issue has been suspended," said Mushfiqul.

The interim government cannot take responsibility for the misdeeds committed by the previous regime, he said on Facebook, adding that those who tried to put the issue under carpet should face action.

Law360, a New York-based legal news publisher, reported on Friday that the move by the US court prompted an immediate appeal from the Bangladesh government.

The Bangladesh government said it is "unprecedented" that a Washington, DC federal judge ordered the arrest of two high-ranking Bangladeshi officials to force their depositions in a power company's lawsuit.

The motion said, "Petitioner did not cite a single example of a court enforcing a sanctions order against a foreign state, much less ordering the arrest of high-ranking foreign government officials during a diplomatic visit to the United States. The lack of precedent is not surprising, as such an action is, or at least was, unimaginable."

Bangladesh condemned the judge's decision, Law360 said.

The dispute has its origins in 1997, when Smith Cogeneration signed a power purchase agreement with the Bangladesh government and its Power Development Board that provided for the construction of a barge-mounted power plant in northern Bangladesh.

Smith Cogeneration told the DC court in its 2006 enforcement petition that the government agreed to provide the company with all the required permits to complete the project, according to the Law360 report.

However, the government nixed the project in 1999 and never provided the company with the necessary permits, Smith Cogeneration claimed.

## A good example of a bad plan

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start within this fiscal year.

The country is now spending from its coffers to bear these expenses.

Prof Selim Raihan, executive director of South Asian Network on Economic Modeling, said the policymakers had not properly discussed how necessary a tunnel was at this particular site to connect the port city and Anwara upazila.

Since the project cost is high, there is doubt it will ever give expected return, he said.

The tunnel earned Tk 37.45 crore from 14.12 lakh vehicles since its inauguration. But the government spent Tk 134.46 crore for its operation, the data shows.

Of the vehicles that used it, almost 77 percent were light, and 12 percent were trucks.

The daily traffic exceeded 10,000 vehicles only on three occasions in the 359 days since it was opened.

Abul Kalam Azad, deputy director of the project, said the government and private development projects on either side of the tunnel have not been implemented.

The tunnel design was based on the vision of "one city two towns", similar to Shanghai in China, he said.

"It was part of a strategy to connect the Mirsarai Economic Zone with Matarbari Deep Sea Port. There were plans to expand the Chattogram port jetty in the southern side of the Karnaphuli, proposals to establish thousands of local and foreign

industrial units in Anwara. But none of that materialised. The result is, fewer vehicles than expected at the outset," he added.

Spending on the tunnel will

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|  | Average daily income Tk <b>10.37</b> lakh            |
|  | Everyday operational cost Tk <b>37.47</b> lakh       |
|  | The tunnel becomes one-year-old tomorrow             |
|  | It earned Tk <b>37.45</b> crore in about a year      |
|  | Operational cost in a year is Tk <b>134.46</b> crore |

significantly rise once the loan repayment starts early next year, he told The Daily Star.

Nasir Uddin Chowdhury, former first vice president of the BGMEA, said the authorities had not taken the initiative to build industries that would have depended on the tunnel.

## BNP yet to be on board, Jamaat is

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unity while ensuring effective governance, he said.

The BNP leaders took note of the two other issues raised by the students, but did not say anything about those.

Hasnat said they would also sit with the Gono Forum, the 12-Party Alliance, and the Gono Odhikar Parishad to discuss these issues today.

Earlier on Thursday night, a delegation of the student movement and nagorik committee went to BNP leader Salahuddin's house, where BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi was also present.

Sources said the leaders of the two platforms argued in favour of their demand for the president's removal. They said President Shahabuddin had misconducted himself and so should be removed. If action were not taken, the interim government's legitimacy would be called into question, they added.

Earlier, on October 23, three top BNP leaders, including Salahuddin, met Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus and warned of a potential constitutional crisis as

a consequence of the president's removal.

After yesterday's meeting, Hasnat said they sat with the Jamaat and the Islami Andolan in the last two days, and both parties clarified their stance, agreeing on the demand for the president's removal.

Some parties and alliances, including the Ganatantra Mancha, the Jatiyatabadi Somomona Jote, Bangladesh Jatiya Party led by Andaleev Rahman Partho, have backed the BNP on its stance that a constitutional crisis should not be created by removing the president.

The October 25 meeting with the Jamaat took place at its central office in Moghbazar, where Jamaat Secretary General Mia Ghulam Parwar, Nayeb-e-Ameer Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taher, and Assistant Secretary General Hamidur Rahman Azad were present.

Meeting sources told The Daily Star that the Jamaat agreed in principle with the demand for the president's removal but emphasised that any action should be based on political consensus.

Five movement leaders, including Hasnat, met Islami Andolan Ameer

"The need for industrialisation had not been considered before building the tunnel," he added.

Over the past few years, businesses were not interested in making new investments because of the state of the economy, he said.

Noted economist Moinul Islam said traffic through the tunnel would be heavier after the construction of the 230-km marine drive road.

"It won't be fully utilised in the next few years, and it won't be possible to pay loan instalments from its earnings. However, we'll see benefits when the Matarbari deep sea port and bay terminal are fully operational," he said.

Prof Selim Raihan said the tunnel is far from the heart of the port city.

However, there is a plan to develop a township in Anwara with Chinese funds, he said.

In November 2015, the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Enec) approved the tunnel project at a cost of Tk 8,446.64 crore. Later, the cost rose to Tk 10,689.42 crore. It was estimated at the time that the daily average traffic through the tunnel would be 28,305 vehicles by 2025 and 37,946 by 2030.

Of the fund, the Exim Bank of China committed \$705.80 million or Tk 5,913.19 crore with 2 percent interest and 0.20 percent service charge, while the Bangladesh government funded the rest.

The Chinese loan needs to be repaid in 15 years, including a five-year grace period.

Syed Muhammad Rezaul Karim, Presidium member Ashraf Ali Akon and Senior Joint Secretary General Gazi Ataur Rahman at Purana Paltan yesterday.

Besides the demand to remove the president, the student leaders raised the topic of constitutional reforms.

According to sources, the Islami Andolan believes that President Shahabuddin has violated his oath by allegedly falsifying information about the resignation of ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, and, therefore, cannot remain in office.

About rewriting the constitution, the party said it did not want comprehensive constitutional changes, rather it favoured cancelling the amendments made by the Awami League between 2009 and 2024.

It also insisted on annulling the three elections held between 2014 and 2024.

Regarding potential constitutional complications in case of removing the president, the party's Joint Secretary General Ataur told The Daily Star, "The prime minister's sudden departure did not create a crisis. Also, the current president was appointed by the ousted prime minister."

## BFF

Salahuddin's four consecutive terms, spanning 16 years. Arguably one of the greatest footballers of the country, Salahuddin had taken over the reins in 2008 and made lofty promises but failed to deliver on many of those.

Although Salahuddin had managed to keep top-tier football running and had some success with women's football, the show was mostly concentrated around the capital as the district leagues became irregular. Allegations of corruption, some of which were later proved, dogged Salahuddin's regime as sponsors started to turn away from football, further debilitating the state of the once-popular sport in the country.

## Old guard to give way

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On the other hand, JCD has long been known for keeping aged people and irregular students in its committees for years — an issue that made headlines on numerous occasions.

Since the political gamut of Bangladesh is undergoing reforms to ensure that rules are followed properly without any discrimination, the student groups also feel the need for change.

Those interviewed for this report said their organisations are also seeking to replace the aged leaders with young ones in keeping with the rules, and the positive vibe brought in by the student-led mass uprising.

Mahbub Alam Shahin, a 2012-13 session student of DU, was made JCD's Shahidullah Hall unit president in 2020. He could not stay there because BCL did not allow him to enter it. He still cannot stay there as he is no longer a regular student.

The 25 other presidents and general secretaries of 13 JCD hall units are also not allowed in their halls as Shahin is the youngest among them, while all the rooms are occupied by regular students.

"It's high time we brought changes in line with the general students' expectations. The high command should form committees with regular students," said Saidul Islam, general secretary of JCD's Haji Muhammad Mohsin Hall unit.

Like Shahin, Saidul cannot go to the hall to engage in political activities.

Not just the hall unit leaders, JCD DU unit President Ganesh Chandra Roy Shahosh and General Secretary Nahiduzzaman Shipon are also irregular students from the 2010-11 and 2011-12 sessions respectively. They were named leaders of a seven-member committee on March 1 this year.

"We're mulling the formation of hall committees with regular residential students. We expect we can do it soon," said Shipon.

JCD General Secretary Nasir Uddin told The Daily Star that they got a "strong and clear message" from BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman to establish the hall committees with regular students.

"We've already founded a 38-member team to constitute committees in all the units, including universities. The activists engaging

in student-friendly politics on their campuses will be chosen as leaders."

Meanwhile, after around three and a half decades, Jamaat-e-Islami's student front Islami Chhatra Shibir has revealed it had a committee at DU.

The committee's President Abu Shadik Kayem is a 2016-17 session student and Secretary SM Farhad is from 2017-18.

Talking to The Daily Star, Shadik said eight out of the 14 members of their DU unit committee were regular students.

He said they will announce their hall committees with undergraduate students soon because they "respect the common students' expectations".

Some leftist student organisations have faculty-based committees, but most of them do not have hall committees. A faction of the Chhatra Union has a committee at the Jagannath Hall only.

"Chhatra League leaders and activists in the last 16 years occupied the halls and forced the students to engage in BCL politics only. That's why we could not form committees at the halls," Maeen Ahmed, general secretary of DU Chhatra Union, told The Daily Star.

"As there's a congenial atmosphere at the halls now, we'll try to form committees there with regular students."

Maeen is a student of the 2017-18 session while the president of his committee, Meghmaller Bosu, is from the 2015-2016 session.

Another section of the Chhatra Union also has a committee at DU. However, its Convener Kazi Rakib resigned from his post for personal reasons. Its joint conveners, Mamun Rana and Sala Uddin Amman, are from the 2017-2018 session.

Salman Siddiqui, president of Samajtantrik Chhatra Front (Marxist), hailed the allocation of seats among regular students in the halls by the authorities. "We have to remain alert so that an undemocratic environment is not created."

He said they would form committees with regular students "who will work for the rights of the students".

Armanul Hoque, convener of DU Chhatra Federation, said all the leaders of their 13-member committee are regular students. "We'll follow this trend while forming committees."

## Harris, Trump

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For Republican A.D. Jefferson, a 62-year-old laborer attending Harris's rally in Houston, the Trump turmoil is too much.

"I just think she's less controversial," he told AFP. "I'm a Republican, but I feel like Trump is just too chaotic for me."

Fresh off a high-energy rally in Texas with pop icon Beyonce to highlight Republican restrictions on abortion, Harris heads to Kalamazoo, Michigan where she will court voters by drawing on yet more stardom, this time deploying one of the Democratic Party's most popular emissaries: former first lady Michelle Obama.

Her husband Barack Obama joined Harris on Thursday for a rally in Georgia.

Harris, 60, rallies Sunday in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the largest city in the largest of the swing states likely to determine the outcome of the presidential election under the US electoral system.

Trump, who swept the three Blue Wall states in his shock victory in 2016 only to see Joe Biden reclaim them for Democrats four years later, is strategizing that clawing back one or more of the trio and winning the other so-called Sun Belt swing states

would propel him back into the White House.

With just a few thousand votes possibly the difference between victory and defeat in the tightest of swing states, Trump holds rallies Saturday in Michigan and Pennsylvania, where a robust ground game and relentless barnstorming of the battlegrounds could prove decisive.

They follow the release late Friday of the extended, three-hour interview that Trump taped for the Joe Rogan Experience, America's most popular podcast.

He is seeking to woo Rogan's massive, largely male audience, as the Republican candidate hunts for viral moments that tap into his everyman appeal.

**'LIKE THE 1930S'**

Then on Sunday night, Trump performs a campaign quirk: rallying his supporters in Madison Square Garden, the iconic arena in the heart of Democrat-heavy New York.

Analysts have pondered why Trump is campaigning in his native New York despite virtually no chance of flipping the state. The brash billionaire and onetime reality television star may be keen to orchestrate a spectacle and demonstrate he can fill an arena in a Democratic bastion.