



PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

The overhead footbridge on the roads leading to Sadarghat launch terminal looks almost empty, as people do not prefer to use it. It is alleged that drug addicts find the footbridge safe for overnight frenzy.

Fresh invective adds fuel to JS stand-off

REAZ AHMAD and SHAKHAWAT LITON

Uncertainty looms large over the prospect of an early solution to the parliamentary stand-off over recurrence of invective against the Leader of the Opposition even after the Chair expunged all unparliamentary words from the proceedings Thursday.

The crisis that the Jatiya Sangsad (JS) faced after State Minister for Housing Alamgir Kabir's alleged aspersion on Awami

League President Sheikh Hasina last Wednesday, were defused to some extent following expunction of 'the offensive, indecent, libellous and unparliamentary words' by Deputy Speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui.

But the stalemate dropped several notches the following day when the prime minister's Parliamentary Affairs Adviser Salauddin Quader Chowdhury uttered fresh invective against Hasina as well as Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The moment the deputy speaker

showed a good gesture by expunging the derogatory words amid the AL demands for expunction of the state minister's comments and an apology from him, Chowdhury's comments further pushed away the possibility of an early rapprochement with the opposition.

"After the deputy speaker expunged the unparliamentary words, what did we hear from Salauddin Quader Chowdhury in the presence of the prime minister in the House (on Thursday night)? His budget discussion was full of indecent words," Awami League

General Secretary Abdul Jalil told The Daily Star last night.

Jalil also hinted that the AL would demand that the Speaker expunge Chowdhury's remarks too. Jalil also reiterated his party demand for an apology from the state minister for making derogatory remarks against Hasina.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed said that there was no point in apologising, as the derogatory

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'Confrontational politics hurdle to erasing poverty'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The law-and-order slide in Bangladesh is bred by confrontational politics and is the biggest hurdle to investment, the key tool in the fight against poverty, Cabinet Secretary Dr Saadat Husain told a roundtable yesterday.

"All members of parliament want strict enforcement of law as long as it does not hurt them or their party colleagues. But it is not possible to apply law selectively," said Husain, who was home secretary twice under the present and past government.

The roundtable, Governance Issues and Political Economy of Reforms, was the last session of a two-day seminar on 'Accelerating

Growth and Poverty Reduction in Bangladesh' that ended yesterday.

The seminar was organised by the Bureau of Economic Research (BER) of Dhaka University, the South Asia Region of the World Bank and the World Bank Institute at Hotel Sheraton in Dhaka.

Prof Nurul Islam, emeritus fellow of the International Food Policy Research Institute at Washington, Prof AR Khan of the University of California, Prof Rehman Sobhan, chairman of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, Professor Muhammad Yunus, managing director of the Grameen Bank, Frederick T Temple, World Bank country director in Dhaka and Mahfuz Anam, editor of The Daily Star, took part in the discussion as panelists.

Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud, chairman of BER and Sadiq Ahmed, World Bank chief economist and sector director for South Asia, made the closing remarks.

Prof Sobhan said the successive governments did not have a coherent policy for divesting the state-owned enterprises.

Citing example of the recently closed down Adamjee Jute Mills, he said it made 30,000 people jobless and put the whole community in the doldrums.

Prof Sobhan said the government did not take any step for rapid replacement of such closed or divested industries.

Referring to poor value addition industries like cement factories and

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Rejoinder

The Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) in a rejoinder pointed out some factual errors in a report headlined "Govt. set to sign power deal with Sino Company" The Daily Star carried on June 8.

The BPDB signed a contract with Chinese company Harbin Power Engineering Company Limited to build the 15MW Tongi Power Plant on turnkey basis at a cost of \$37.08 million with Bangladeshi involvement of Tk 9.08 crore. The total cost in the dollar stands at 38.64 million.

In the previous bid in 1999, the Malaysian company TNB offered building of the power plant at a cost of \$31.1 million, having net power output of 68MW.

Later, in a re-tender, the Korean company LG Engineering offered setting-up of a 73MW plant at a cost of \$45.85 million.

The BPDB believes that in such a context, the contract with Harbin was very reasonable and competitive.

AL's day-long hartal today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) enforces a countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal today in protest against the 'tax-laden budget' proposed for the fiscal 2003-04.

The AL presidium on June 15 decided to enforce the shutdown from 6:00am to 6:00pm, also to protest law-and-order slide.

The party also called an eight-hour countrywide hartal on June 12 protesting the law-and-order tumble and lack of security in public life. The general strike coincided with the placing of the budget in parliament.

The Bangladesh Chhatra League, student front of the AL, enforced a half-day hartal on June 19, protesting the killing of its city unit leader Palash, the closedown coinciding with the visit of US Secretary of State Colin Powell.

Addressing a press conference at

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Porcession batoned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police used teargas and baton on a procession of the Awami League (AL) on Bangabandhu Avenue yesterday.

Sources said police charged baton when leaders and activists of AL city unit tried to break a police cordon on the western end of Bangabandhu Avenue.

AL brought out processions in Dhaka and elsewhere in support of its dawn-to-dusk hartal today.

Witnesses said the avenue turned into a battlefield as the AL activists countered police attack with brickbats. The skirmish lasted for about half an hour.

AL sources said police also fired bullets to disperse the crowd of pro-

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Coaxing patients into treatment trap

Law enforcers detect 15 dishonest physicians, 24 clinics and labs

SHARIFUL ISLAM

A law-enforcement agency is making a list of unscrupulous physicians involved in luring patients from public hospitals at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar to private clinics and laboratories to make money.

About 24 private clinics and pathological labs have also been bracketed for being the lynchpin of such organised crime.

"We've so far detected about 15 such dishonest physicians and

nearly 24 clinics and labs," confirmed a senior official in that agency, seeking anonymity.

Owners of the clinics and labs in collusion with brokers and certain amoral physicians, lab technicians and staff of Pangu (orthopaedic) hospital, Suhrawardy Hospital and National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) compel helpless patients to take treatment outside public hospitals at exorbitant prices.

Though government hospitals are equipped with pathological

facilities, some doctors send patients to get tests done in the labs of their choices. The physicians reportedly get commission, ranging from 40 per cent to 60 per cent of total costs from these medical outfits.

Investigators have already gathered enough evidence against the already bracketed doctors and owners of the clinics and labs. "We are still trying to find out if some others were involved in the nexus," said the official.

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Landslides kill 8 more in Khagrachhari

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Landslides killed eight more people in Khagrachhari, raising the number of dead in the hill district to 24 and the combined death toll in Chittagong and Khagrachhari to 31, police and security sources said yesterday.

Five of the victims were killed in Pathachhara of Guimara and three in Palashpur.

A few more people also remained missing in the hill district, which, along with Chittagong, has been battered by landslides and flash floods since Wednesday.

Earlier, landslides killed 16 people in Khagrachhari's Ramgarh upazila in 24 hours till 6:00pm Thursday. During the same period in Chittagong, flash floods killed two people in the city and five were buried alive in a landslide in Mirer Sarai.

Golam Hossain, additional deputy commissioner (ADC) general of Khagrachhari hill district yesterday told The Daily Star that the overall situation there had started improving with the recession of floodwater as rains eased a bit yesterday.

But he said the flood situation at

Ramgarh had worsened with the onrush of water from Feni River in full spate and about 2000 affected people had taken shelter at six relief centres at Khagrachhari.

But some of the families returned home after floodwaters receded in some places yesterday morning, he added.

Magistrate Zafar Alam at the Khagrachhari district administration office said about 9,000 families have been affected by flash floods and landslides in Khagrachhari district as their houses were more or less destroyed.

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PHOTO: STAR

The elder sister of transport leader Abdus Salam grieves over her brother's death. Salam was gunned down by unknown assailants in Mirpur yesterday.

Transport leader gunned down

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unknown assailants gunned down a transport leader in the city's Mirpur area yesterday morning.

Police and colleagues of the victim said five gangsters, who came by a silver car, sprayed Abdus Salam, 40, with bullets near the Ideal College at Section 10.

Salam took at least nine bullets in the head, throat, chest, abdomen and thighs and died on the spot.

He was the joint organising secretary of Mirpur Thana Sarak Paribahan Sramik Union and acting as its general secretary in absence of the office-bearer.

Mirpur police retrieved the body and sent it to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for post-mortem.

Witnesses said Salam went to the scene at about 11:10am in the



Abdus Salam

pillion seat of Shaheb Ali's motorcycle. Ali is allegedly member of a gang in Mirpur.

The victim's colleagues said he was killed as he stopped paying Tk 30,000 a month to the operatives of Kala Jahangir gang a few days ago.

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