

MP Naser Rahman

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division.

Nuruzzaman got the work orders from the Roads and Highways Department (RHD).

Nasser countered the allegations saying, "It appears from the news items that a senior MP of our own party from Noakhali, who is also a lawyer, has instigated Nuruzzaman to hold the press conference. This is nothing but a manifestation of political ill will and jealousy."

"That the entire matter is politically motivated is substantiated by the fact that Nuruzzaman was taken to the press conference by a younger brother of the chief whip of the opposition which became evident from the news item," he added.

Rahman said he did not know Nuruzzaman until the end of last month when he met him after making some frantic efforts. "It transpired that he was executing some RHD contracts in parts of my constituency, Moulvibazar-3."

"The RHD decided to cancel the contracts after serving several show cause notices upon Nuruzzaman because of his repeated failures to commence and complete the work under the contracts."

"He sought assistance from me, a local MP, to avoid cancellation of the contracts. The road development for which he was engaged was of utmost importance to the people of my area," he added.

Rahman continued, "His failure to commence and complete the work on time caused great sufferings to local people, who had earlier brought the matter to my notice and

asked for my intervention for timely competition of the work."

"I regretted my inability to assist Nuruzzaman in this matter. I took him to task and expressed my annoyance at his gross failures, which caused so much trouble to the people in my constituency. He repeatedly asked for help, but I was unmovable," Rahman added.

Having failed to convince me, he played his last trick, accusing me of not helping him because he was related to the chief whip of the opposition in parliament. After that, I threw him out of my office," Rahman said.

He said, "At no point of the conversation did I ask Nuruzzaman to give any sum of money, nor did he offer any money to me. The allegations brought by Nuruzzaman are absolutely preposterous and malicious."

Meanwhile, the communications ministry yesterday refuted the allegation of Nuruzzaman about cancellation of work order for road construction.

The ministry in a release said the work orders were cancelled after the firm 'Messers Mohammad Yunus and Brothers' failed to complete construction of a 12-kilometre pavement on Sylhet-Fenchuganj-Rajshahi-Moulvibazar-Srimongal-Shaesthaganj-Jagodishpur Road in time.

The ministry said the firm not only failed to complete the work, but could not even take the construction materials to the site.

The RHD had awarded the job on condition that it would be done in 120 days.

Joynal Hazari accomplice arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Feni

A listed top criminal and accomplice of Joynal Hazari was caught and handed over to police by a rival group at Masterpara at about 10:00pm Thursday night.

Sukdamath Tapan, also former secretary of the Feni Pourashava unit Awami League, was wanted in two murder cases including the murder of Abdul Jalil.

Another group of Hazari beat up and handed Tapan over to the police. Police yesterday produced him before a magistrate's court that sent him to jail. Police will seek his remand today.

Outlaws kill one for not paying toll

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Armed cadres of the outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) gunned down one person at Kshetra village in Tala upazila Friday night as he could not meet their demand for toll, police said.

The victim is Fazlur Rahman, 55. Quoting local people, police said the PBCP elements demanded Tk 50,000 from Fazlur about 15 days ago and gave him three days to pay the money.

The cadres raided his house at about 11:00pm Friday and asked him to come out. When he did not, they held two children of his family at gunpoint. He then had to come out and the gang shot him in the chest. He died on the spot.

Police sent the body to Satkhira hospital for autopsy. A case was filed with Tala Police Station without accusing anyone.

Meanwhile, a joint drive to curb crimes and nab criminals is going on in the district.

BTRC asked to dispose of JTV appeal on frequency

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court (SC) yesterday ordered Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC) to dispose of an application of Jamuna Television (JTV) for frequency allotment.

However, the bench comprising Justice Mohammad Ruhul Amin, Justice Syed JR Muddassir and Justice MM Ruhul Amin did not mention anything about the issuance of a licence to JTV or permission for satellite broadcasting.

Attorney General AF Hasan Ariff appeared for the government while Barrister Rafique-ul-Haq appeared for JTV.

The government filed a leave to appeal petition before the SC against an order of the High Court (HC) division bench on the issuance of a licence to JTV, frequency allocation and permission for satellite broadcasting.

Earlier, the HC division bench comprising Justice Shah Abu Nayeem Mominur Rahman and Justice Abdul Awal directed the government to dispose of the application within 30 days.

JU impasse rolls on to 10th day

JU CORRESPONDENT

The impasse in the academic and administrative activities at Jahangirnagar University (JU) continued for the 10th consecutive day yesterday due to the indefinite strike called by the JU Teachers Association (JUTA).

Classes were not held and most of the examinations did not take place yesterday.

A large number of students have already left the campus.

JUTA began the strike to press its two-point demand - removal of Vice Chancellor Prof. Jasim Uddin Ahmad and punishment of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal activists who confined the provost and eight house tutors of Shaheed Salam Barkat Hall on August 11.

The VC said, "JUTA seeks the intervention of the prime minister and chancellor of the university for my removal. Meeting the demand depends on the chancellor. I requested the teachers to return to their classes and I don't have anything more to do."

2 killed

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A case was filed yesterday, but none could be arrested.

Police recovered the body of the housewife, Nipa, 22, yesterday morning and sent it to the DMCH for autopsy. "We found her lying in her bed, but there were no mark of injury in her body," the duty officer at Mohammadpur Police Station said last night.

Morgue sources said Nipa might have committed suicide between 11:00pm Friday and 6:00am yesterday.

But Nipa's brother Omar Faruk filed a case with Mohammadpur Police Station, accusing her husband of killing her.

Police said her rickshawpuller husband Abdul Hashem is absconding since the incident.

US chopper

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shot down was in June.

"A helicopter did go down," Capt. Jefferson Wolfe, a spokesman for the 4th Infantry Division, said. "We can confirm it. It was a Black Hawk. We are investigating."

In Baghdad, the US military command said the five people on board were injured but were "safely evacuated." The command did not say why the helicopter went down but added that after it crashed it received ground fire.

An injured person was seen being removed from the site on a stretcher. Black Hawks ordinarily have a crew of three and can carry an additional 11 passengers.

The downing came at a time when US officials have been warning that thousands of shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles remain unaccounted for after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime and pose a threat to US military aircraft.

RPGs, also fired with a shoulder device, are a weapon frequently used by insurgents for ambushes on American forces.

Tikrit, the hometown of ousted leader Saddam Hussein, lies in the heart of the "Sunni Triangle," the region of central Iraq north of Baghdad that has seen multiple attacks every day against US forces. The region is where Saddam drew his strongest support, and his loyalists are now believed to be leading resistance to the U.S.-led occupation.

Over 100 hurt in clash over rock concert

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Amob clashed with police yesterday in Barisal city, leaving scores wounded, 13 shops and 50 vehicles damaged when a rock concert was cancelled for the second time.

Antar Showbiz, organiser of the show, rescheduled the concert at Bangabandhu Uddayan venue featuring Nagar Baul and Prometheus. Performers of the show fled the city after the stage collapsed on Friday afternoon injuring eight persons, fans alleged.

Fans started to crowd at the venue from morning. Agitating fans damaged shops, trucks, cars and microbuses along Katpatti Road, Band Road, Port Road, Amtala crossing, Sadar Road finding the stage empty. Later, truck labourers posted road barricades to protest damages on trucks and clashed with fans and police.

Police clubbed to control the agitating mob and held four persons during the clash. The Daily Star photojournalist Masum Mizan and Daily Khabarpatra reporter Shamim Ahmed were also injured during the clash.

Antar Showbiz had promised to refund money for the tickets, sources said.

Petrobangla

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The Habiganj-Rashidpur pipeline is built.

About 16 local companies, one of which is owned by a senior official of Petrobangla, have been participating in pipeline construction bids for over a decade, sources said.

Track records show local bidders tend to submit identical offers at double the price of the lowest international bidders, they said.

Three years ago when Petrobangla floated an open tender for the 54km 30inch pipeline construction between Habiganj and Ashuganj, it received an offer of a Chinese-Bangladeshi joint venture company that outlined a cost of Tk 110 crore. On the other hand, the lowest offer from local bidders for that tender was Tk 220 crore.

In 1998, local bidders succeeded in convincing the authorities to cancel the first international bidding for construction of an 18km 20inch pipeline on the grounds that local bidders should be given a chance.

The second bid was limited to local bidders only, four in all offering an identical project cost. Petrobangla again cancelled the bid and floated an international bid. The lowest local bid was Tk 12 crore while the lowest international bid was Tk 7.56 crore. The contract went to the foreign company.

In 1991, local bidders were given the job of setting up as 18km 20inch pipeline in Raouzan at a cost of Tk 10 crore. But sources said it should not have exceeded Tk 6 crore.

Purbachal project

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allegations of political bias in allocation.

"90 per cent of the selections were made through a computerised system under the government's new allotment rule, and the remaining 10 per cent of the plots were allotted to genuine and deserving candidates under Dhaka Improvement Trust Rules from 1969," he claimed.

The minister said the plots will be handed over to the successful applicants as quickly as possible but did not give any specific time-frame.

People of the area affected due to land acquisition for the PNTP will be given plots at a nominal price, the minister said.

Rajuk (Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha) Chairman Iqbal Uddin Ahmed and the Secretary for the Ministry of Housing and Public Works were also present at the press conference.

NCB staff

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funds available.

The WB previously submitted two similar proposals but later modified them to include the rehabilitation component in the scheme.

DFID conducted a survey on over 500 former SOE staff who were retrenched last fiscal. The study found that 50 per cent of them lacked skill development training.

Last fiscal, 57,000 from 28 SOEs were retrenched.

The WB suggests that 45,000 staff from 28 SOEs may be retrenched this fiscal at a cost of \$181 million.

In fiscal 2004-2005, another 25,000 staff of 36 SOEs would be retrenched at a cost of \$103 million, and in 2005-2006, another 25,000 staffs of 36 more SOEs would go.

These SOEs include units producing jute, textiles, sugar and wood products.

After retrenchment, the government would need another \$793.7 million to pay off the liabilities of these 100 SOEs to make them ready for privatisation.

The aide-memoire suggests that the programme should be as 'decentralised and localised' as possible so that workers' needs in various regions are met.

The most effective approach would be to rely on existing training programmes and institutions rather than creating new ones, it adds.

The WB suggests that the majority of workers should be given 'marketable skill development training, with a link to alternative earning opportunities'.

River-link plan

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surable human miseries and sufferings.

The foreign minister's remarks came in the wake of an Indian Supreme Court judgement that directed the government to implement the project in 10 years.

He also referred to another Indian plan for the construction of a dam at Tipaimukh on the Barak river near the Bangladesh border.

"The implementation of this project together with a barrage, they are contemplating building at Phulerhat, will also harm Bangladesh."

On a question that would be Bangladesh's position if India continued with the mammoth project, the foreign minister said, "We would try to resolve the problem through bilateral negotiations."

India can take any development project but they should follow the internationally approved set of rules and regulations while constructing dams or barrages on international rivers, he said.

Morshed said Dhaka took the issue with New Delhi expressing deep concern and requesting it not to proceed with the schemes.

"We are ready for consultation to ensure that a major catastrophe does not result from these projects. We are continually in touch with New Delhi and are trying to convince them that the river linking project would be harmful for both the countries."

Ambassador Mufleh R Osmany also spoke at the seminar held at the auditorium of Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) marking the two

years of the coalition in office.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Reaz Rahman and Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury were present.

Taking another question, the foreign minister categorically denied the presence of any hideout of insurgents in the Bangladesh territory.

Morshed also expressed concern over nuclearization of south Asia, saying it emerged as one of the most dangerous place on the earth today.

"Nuclearization of the two major countries in our neighbourhood can spell disaster for the rest of us."

Explaining the foreign policy, Morshed said the 'look east approach' was the main focus in the second year of the government.

A number of heads of government and high officials visited Bangladesh and relations with china, Thailand and Myanmar were cemented in line with the policy, he said.

Morshed said the 'look east approach' was not at the cost of relations with Western nations.

"They are our biggest trade partners and relations with them would deepen further in the future."

To another question, the foreign minister said Bangladesh would always stand by the people of Iraq in their quest for peace, stability and democracy.

He underscored the need for revitalisation of international organisations for a constructive role in promoting peace, stability, harmony and development.

Ex-BNP MP

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deposition to the court on Thursday.

Badsha Miah, son of Afsar Ali of Gochindanga under Bhurungamari in Kurigram district, appeared before the Speedy Trial Tribunal at 10:00 am.

Humayun Kabir was also present in the court and after making an unsuccessful attempt to convince Badsha Miah not to implicate him, threatened him by saying, "You will be killed if you do not give your deposition as per my instructions."

Badsha Miah did not identify Humayun Kabir in his deposition in court, although he had identified him in the presence of the Special Public Prosecutor (PP) Harun-or-Rashid Khan one hour before.

Later, Badsha was declared a 'hostile witness' and cross-examined by the PP.

The PP submitted a petition seeking the cancellation of Humayun Kabir's bail, stating that Humayun Kabir had threatened Badsha Miah, a vital witness in the case. No witness will appear before the court if Humayun Kabir is on bail, and thus his bail should be cancelled, the PP said.

Judge Jahangir Alam Mollah has fixed today for the hearing on the petition.

Humayun Kabir and his accomplice Salahuddin rented a room at the Hotel Almas in Kurigram on August 31, 2001 and stayed there till September 3. Badsha Miah was working at the hotel at the time.

Earlier, the court recorded statements of 18 prosecution witnesses including the victim's mother Hena Akhter.

Sujan, 35, a former BNP MP from Brahmanbaria-6 constituency and former vice president of Haji Mohammad Mohsin Hall Students Union of Dhaka University, was abducted by his rivals and found dead near the Doyel Chattar on the Dhaka University campus on July 3, 2001.

AL to observe Jail Killing Day on Nov 3

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) will observe the 'Jail Killing Day' on November 3 with due solemnity in remembrance of four national leaders killed inside Dhaka Central Jail on the day in 1975.

It was decided at a meeting of the party's secretariat yesterday that a discussion will be held in front of Bangabandhu Bhaban at Dhanmondi on November 3, with party chief Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

The leaders of the AL and its allied organisations will place wreaths on the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the morning and offer feteha at the graves of the slain national leaders.

National and party flags will be hoisted at half-mast along with black flags at the party offices in Dhaka and other places. Leaders and workers will wear black badges to mourn the killings.

Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed, M Qamaruzzaman and M Mansur Ali, four senior cabinet members in Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's government were killed by some disgruntled members of the army at Dhaka Central Jail on November 3, 1975.

Yesterday's meeting also urged people to join AL processions and rallies to protest the government's failure to control the prices of essentials.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil chaired the meeting held at the party's Dhanmondi office.

No one will be spared for hindering dev Warns PM

UNB, Jhenidah

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday urged people to join the movement for development the government has launched to make Bangladesh a self-reliant country through the best use of its resources.

"I'll continue to work for development, you support our efforts and we will present you a self-reliant country," she said while addressing a rally at Jhenidah Government Boys High School ground in the evening.

The prime minister sounded a note of warning against those trying to hinder development efforts. "No one trying to hinder development will be spared, whoever he may be," she said, accusing the main opposition of being indulged in such disruptive activities.

Presided over by Moshirur Rahman MP, the rally was addressed, among others, by Information Minister M Tariqul Islam, Social Welfare Minister Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid, Dhaka City Mayor Sadek Hossain

Khoka, Education Minister M Osman Farruk, State Minister for Education Ehsanul Huq Milon, Shahiduzzaman Beltu MP and Shahidul Islam Master MP.

She accused the past Awami League government of introducing mass cheating at public examinations which, she said, blighted education of the nation.

The Prime Minister thanked the people for their cooperation in the government efforts to check cheating in public examinations.

She also accused the past Awami League government of damaging relationship with different countries, particularly with Malaysia.

She reminded that Malaysia had stopped taking manpower from Bangladesh during the Awami League rule.

The Prime Minister said that employment opportunity in Malaysia had once again been created. She also mentioned the present opportunity of exporting Bangladesh manpower to Saudi Arabia and Korea.

North Korea

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President Roh Moo-hyun's foreign policy adviser, told Yonhap news agency the North's statement was "very encouraging".

The North said Pyongyang's request was "simple and clear".

"What we want is for both sides to drop guns and establish normal state relationship to co-exist peacefully," the spokesman said. "The unilateral demand that one of the two belligerent parties forces the other party to drop guns and come out first with its hands up can never be met."

The remarks were stripped of the trademark harsh rhetoric toward Washington and were in contrast to an initial KCNA commentary earlier this week that described Bush's offer as laughable and not worth considering. It also did not reiterate its stock phrase demanding Washington drop its "hostile policy".

Significantly, Saturday's first official response came ahead of a visit next week by a Chinese delegation headed by Beijing's Communist Party number two, Wu Bangguo.

China is North Korea's main ally but was instrumental in cajoling Pyongyang to attend a three-way round of talks in April with the United States and then August's six-way talks.

Godfathers

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Zia International Airport prior to leaving the country on a six-day trip to Frankfurt, Germany.

Speaking about the filing of defamation cases by ruling party men against AL leaders, Hasina said, "We will face them before the court." She said the ruling party had "proved its political bankruptcy" by filing cases against her party leaders in different districts.

"Such cases were filed against Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by the autocratic rulers of Pakistan when he placed the historic six-point demand," Hasina said.

The AL published a list of alleged godfathers in an October 16 press briefing that prompted a number of leaders of the ruling alliance to file defamation cases against AL leaders.

The AL chief said the list of godfathers was published because the nation wanted the culprits to be identified.

Replying to a query on a supreme court judge facing graft charges, Hasina said, "It is nothing but an ill effect of politicisation of the judiciary by the ruling alliance." Hasina blamed the government for tarnishing the image of the country and claimed that foreigners are not interested in investing in Bangladesh.

"The present government wants to turn the country into a market for foreign products and it is not interested in utilising domestic resources," she said.

Hasina said during her visit she would urge German entrepreneurs to invest in joint ventures in Bangladesh. "I will also request them to recruit Bangladeshi IT professionals as the sector has huge potential," she said.

Hasina will exchange views on bilateral and international affairs with German politicians, businessmen and civil society members.

Moghul-era relics

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central quadrangle was planned on a grand scale and embellished in the imperial Mughal style.

Chhota Katra was built by Shaista Khan in 1663, about 200 yards east of Bara Katra. Its layout is similar, but smaller. One of its two monumental gateways overlooking the riverside is three-storied with a two-storey frontal arch.

Archaeology department officials say they are unable to preserve the site because of shortages of staff and money.

"The sites have been out of our grip for years," said Dewan Delwar Hossain, director of the department. "Actually, the grabbing process started before independence. Now we can't evict them even if we wanted to, because we don't have enough power."

A restaurant owner at the south gate of the Bara Katra confirmed that the invasion of the site began long ago. "I've been here for more than two decades and people have lived and had businesses here all that time. Nobody comes and asks about the monuments."

Neglect began even earlier. An English school was opened in the Chhota Katra building in 1816 and another school in 1857.

1 killed, 2 hurt as branch of roadside tree breaks down

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

One was killed and two others injured when a rotten branch of a roadside tree broke down on them at about 3:00pm Saturday.

Amirul Islam, 32, of Delkddin under sadar upazila, Rabiul Islam, 31, and Wadud, 34, were standing to hear the speech of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at Jhenidah Government Boys High School when the branch gave way.

Amirul died on the spot. The injured were rushed to Jhenidah General Hospital in critical conditions.

Power sector

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incurring heavy losses due to gross irregularities and corruption.

"Corruption, irregularities, inefficiency cripple the power sector," Abdul Alim, chairman of the committee told newsmen after meeting.

The committee also asked the power development board and desa to submit separate reports specifying the way to reduce system loss. Now the system loss is 22 to 24, and the committee asked to reduce it to 10 to 12.

According to the decision, a committee, performance audit committee, will be formed comprising all the officials of the different organizations of power sector, officials from Comptroller and Auditor General's office and parliament members. The committee will monitor the performance of different body in power sector.

The other body will be formed to identify the reason behind slow implementation of the projects in power sector. Both the committees will submit their report to the parliamentary committee. Reviewing the findings the committee will recommend to the ministry to take steps, said the chairman.

Abdul Alim presided over the meeting held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan. Committee members and officials concerned were present at the meeting.