

Godfather issue AL plans two-way battle against BNP's suing-spree

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) plans to wage legal and political battles against the defamation cases filed against its top leaders by the BNP-led ruling alliance leaders.

The cases were filed after the AL made public a list of 102 alliance leaders including ministers and lawmakers branding them as 'godfathers' on October 16.

"We have already consulted our legal experts on the issue and decided to go to courts confidently as we have substantial proofs in favour of our claims," AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil said.

He however said, "We are yet to decide whether to go to the High Court or the district courts with which the cases are being filed. We have not received summons from courts till now," he said.

A decision will be taken in consultation with legal experts of the party once the summons are served, Jalil added.

A magistrate's court in Natore has already summoned the accused in a defamation case to the court today.

But Jalil and other party leaders said they will not turn up in the court as they have not received the summons.

Senior AL leaders have suggested the party should take this opportunity to step up its activities by holding grand rallies wherever the central leaders accused in defamation cases will go to appear before courts.

"The cases intended to harass political opponents of the government will give the Awami League a chance to bring dynamism to the organisational activities across the country," said one leader.

District units of the AL have already been instructed to consult

Tk 2.5 lakh medicine haul at ZIA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The customs officials at Zia International Airport (Zia) yesterday seized contraband medicine worth about Tk 2.5 lakh from the luggage of a Biman flight steward.

Flight Steward Toaifal Ahmed returned from Riyadh on the BG-050 flight at about 10:30am. Customs men searched his luggage and found 8,640 pieces Salexid and 590 Neoral tablet worth Tk 2.5 lakh.

The seized medicines were kept at the customs warehouse.

Lanka in turmoil

FROM PAGE 1

remain calm.

He said the government would not deviate from its mandate to "pursue the path of peace, security and economic prosperity" after the "irresponsible and precipitous actions of the president aimed at plunging the country into chaos and anarchy".

"I call upon all of you, the people, the armed forces, police and public service to remain calm and vigilant in the face of this deliberate attempt to endanger the peace process, which we will together overcome," he said.

In a one-page statement, Kumaratunga said she sacked the three ministers in the "national interest" but did not elaborate.

"This step has been taken after careful consideration, in order to prevent further deterioration of the security situation in the country," she said. "The reasons for this action will be made known to the public in due course."

She ordered police and troops to go on red alert and cancelled all police leave, officials said.

The president's party has been in opposition in parliament since 2001 but Kumaratunga, who was elected separately, retains the power to dismiss cabinet ministers.

She ordered hundreds of heavily armed soldiers to surround the state printing presses and troops were sent to the state radio and television stations, officials said.

The state presses print the government gazette that would formalise the ministers' dismissal.

Kumaratunga's Sri Lanka Freedom Party earlier Tuesday rejected a Tamil Tiger proposal for a de facto federal structure for the island to end three decades of civil war, calling it a foundation for partition.

"The proposals clearly affect the sovereignty of the Republic of Sri Lanka and violate its constitution," her party said in a statement, which urged foreign powers not to push an unacceptable solution on the country.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) handed over their proposal to the government on Saturday and at the same time said they were

local lawyers to face the legal battles ahead and also to organise anti-government rallies, he mentioned.

The AL leaders charged with defamation include Abdus Samad Azad, Abdul Jalil, Abdul Razzak, Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed, Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Suranjit Sengupta, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Matia Chowdhury, SAMS Kibria, ASHK Sadeq, Obaidul Kader, Abdul Mannan Khan, Ashim Kumar Ukil and BM Mozammel.

The alliance leaders who filed these cases include Khondokar and Family Welfare Minister Khondokar Mosharrif Hossain, Chief Whip Khandakar Delwar Hossain and State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin.

Meanwhile, Opposition Leader and AL President Sheikh Hasina said recently her party will announce another list of ruling alliance 'godfathers'.

Russia won't send troops to Iraq

AFP, Rome

Moscow is not considering sending troops to help the US-led occupying forces in oil-rich Iraq because the conditions are not right, Russian President Vladimir Putin said in an interview published yesterday.

"At the moment we're not even considering it. The conditions for Russian military participation are not right," Putin told Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera.

"From the start we opposed military intervention (in Iraq). It would be incoherent and stupid today to say we were prepared to send troops."

Putin said it was urgent to move swiftly in Iraq to restore sovereignty to the Iraqi people.

"It is vital to bring together the efforts of the international community to create the conditions for control to be handed to the Iraqi people," he stressed.

The Russian president offered his condolences to the United States for its troop losses in Iraq. A total 140 US soldiers have died in Iraq since May 1, when Washington declared major combat was over, according to an AFP count based on the latest information provided by the Pentagon.

Putin is scheduled to arrive in the Italian capital on Tuesday evening for a Russia-European Union summit and to meet Pope John Paul II.

Hasina leaves for China tonight

UNB, Dhaka

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina leaves Dhaka tonight for China on a seven-day visit at the invitation of the Communist Party of China.

During her stay in China, she will visit three provinces including Beijing and Shanghai.

Hasina is scheduled to hold official meetings with Chinese Communist Party leaders and visit Pudong Industrial parks in Shanghai.

She is likely to return home on November 13, according to party sources.

Commenting on the visit, former foreign minister Abdus Samad Azad told reporters that it would help strengthen bilateral cooperation between Bangladesh and China and foster relations between Awami League and the Communist Party of China.

Meanwhile, the newly appointed Chinese Ambassador in Bangladesh, Chai Xi, yesterday called on Hasina at her residence and discussed various issues of mutual interest.

Sheikh Hasina lauded China's assistance for Bangladesh and hoped relations between the two friendly countries would deepen, the meeting sources said.

Kazi Zafrullah MP, Obaidul Kader, Hasina's Political Secretary Sabur Hossain Chowdhury, AL International Affairs Secretary Syed Abul Hossain, and former diplomats Faruk Chowdhury and Mahmud Ali are accompanying the AL chief.

Check price

FROM PAGE 12

governance. The issue of good governance should be given an institutional shape and not just written on paper."

"Also, it is not desirable that one government agency will blame another and try to shift responsibilities every time an issue arises."

"This also hurts the government's image," added the report.

Decades ago, a government institution called Department of Trade and Commerce used to control prices but was dissolved in 1981 with formation of Department of Prices and Market Intelligence. This new department was also dissolved in 1990, and since then the government does not have any price control instrument.

On October 29, the parliamentary standing committee on commerce ministry countered the commerce minister's claim that prices of essentials were coming down and decided to discuss the matter in details today.

The report of the ministry will be submitted in defence of its position on the price situation.

Jamal Uddin

FROM PAGE 1

home in Chittagong, but could not trace him until yesterday.

Nazma told The Daily Star by phone that the PM assured her of doing everything to rescue Jamal. "Army, BDR and police will be engaged in the rescue operation," she said quoting the prime minister, who also asked her to keep in touch.

Liton said, "She advised us not to worry."

Prime Minister's Press Secretary Tajul Islam, briefing reporters, said Khaleda hoped the government measures would bring Jamal back.

Earlier, the wife of Jamal along with their two sons met Home Minister Atif Hossain Chowdhury and State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar Saturday last.

Dengue

FROM PAGE 1

At Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital (BSMMUH) male ward, a dengue patient is being treated.

At Holy Family Red Crescent Hospital, a dengue suspect patient is now under treatment. The patient, admitted on November 2, has high fever and rash.

At Al-Rajji, Nibedita Hospital and Monwara Clinic, five patients having symptoms of dengue fever were hospitalized, sources said yesterday.

At Central and Shamarita hospitals, 12 dengue suspect patients were admitted in the last four days.

Doctors said it is not necessarily a dengue case when one has high fever and rash. Several other reasons may cause such symptoms.

Meanwhile, Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) without any surveillance team is in the dark about the population of Aedes mosquito that causes dengue infection.

The corporation last year had put to work 20 entomologists who collected data on Aedes population density from all the 90 wards of the city and produced maps based on the density.

The DCC then prepared an action plan. But it did not initiate any surveillance this year and so has not taken any special measures to fight Aedes mosquito.

"The infection rate is still not high but the fact remains that we are actually in the dark about what lies ahead," said a senior DCC official.

Dengue is a mosquito-borne infection which in recent years has become a major international public health concern. Dengue is found predominantly in urban and semi-urban areas.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia offers prayers at an iftar party she hosted for cabinet ministers, lawmakers and other leaders of political parties, including the ruling BNP, at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday.

AL sees change

FROM PAGE 12

The AL leader fired a broadside at the government for its policy to strengthen relations with eastern countries, saying such efforts would not yield any benefit for Bangladesh.

The government whisked the country from its stance to achieve highest economic benefit through regional cooperation, initiated by the previous AL government, he said.

"Although there is some development in bilateral relations with some southeast countries, it isolated Bangladesh from others," Samad Azad said, adding all efforts in foreign policy of the government are confined to the "look east policy".

"The previous Awami League government stressed South Asia in its foreign policy and took initiatives to strengthen relations with India," Samad Azad said.

But the coalition failed to minimise the huge trade deficit with India and resolve disputes on sharing water of 54 international rivers, he said.

On New Delhi's planned river-link project, the AL leader said the project would badly affect Bangladesh, but the government emphasised raising the issue at international forums instead of a bilateral solution.

Samad Azad said the government did not strive for reactivating the D-8, constituted with eight Muslim countries including Bangladesh to accelerate member-state development, adding: "There is no move by the foreign ministry with the BIMSTEC also."

On inclusion of Bangladesh on the

US list of terror-risk nations, he said the government was trying to find a solace in Bangladesh's identity as a liberal Muslim democratic state but could not exclude Bangladesh from the list.

He accused the government of playing double standard on the Iraq crisis: the coalition always speaks for Islam, but it kept silent on the killing of innocent Iraqi Muslims.

The AL wants a resolution to the Iraq crisis through the United Nations, ensuring sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq, the former foreign minister said. He also favoured sending Bangladeshi troops only under the UN peacekeeping mission.

On the post of the OIC (Organisation of Islamic Conference) secretary general, he said the bright prospect of Bangladesh in getting the job wore out because of nomination of a person with a murky past.

Presidium member Kazi Zafrullah, joint secretaries Obaidul Kader, Syed Ashraf Islam and Mukul Bose, International Affairs Secretary Syed Abul Hossain, organising secretaries Abdul Mannan, Mahmudul Rahman Manna, Akhtaruzzaman, Abdur Rahman, Ahsim Kumar Ukil and lawmaker Sohail Taj were present.

Knit exporters

FROM PAGE 1

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal leader Mahubur Rahman Ismail said workers did not vandalise any garment factory, rather vested quarters were attacking garment units to foil the movement of workers.

Starvation stalks

FROM PAGE 1

Unprecedented draught this year has also compounded their yearly woes, prolonging the spell over a month already.

Meanwhile, the five additional secretaries, tasked with monitoring the mona situation, left Dhaka yesterday for the five worst-affected districts -- Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, Gaibandha, Kurigram and Nilphamari.

Official sources said the additional secretaries have been asked to monitor the situation in person, supervise the relief operation and report to the Prime Minister's Office and the relief and disaster management ministry.

At the bus terminals in Kurigram, people are found deserting their home to try their luck in big towns like Bogra, Rajshahi and Dhaka.

But its even harder for women, children and elderly people, who have nowhere to go.

On the Dharla embankment of Buraburi village, Ulipur, three households -- Selima, Aklima and Shakila, aged between 35 and 40 years -- said they do not know how long they can survive without food and work.

"My four daughters and I have been fasting day and night. We take only water during iftar and at night we eat kaun (millet) rice along with kachu (arum) curry," said Aklima, whose husband and the only son went to Dhaka a week ago.

"A villager gave me only Tk 1 on

Wholesale market

FROM PAGE 1

are much higher, as we have to bear transport cost and rents."

Shoppers expressed frustration at the price hike of essentials. "Many items went beyond my reach," said Babul, who was shopping at Hatirpul kitchen market.

At Karwan Bazar, a kilo of local onions sold unchanged at Tk 28-30. Indian onions at Tk 22-24, turmeric at Tk 75, local garlic at Tk 32, Indian garlic at Tk 24, dried chilli at Tk 85, edible oil at Tk 48-52.

JCD cadres threaten JU journalist with death

JU CORRESPONDENT

Jatayatadhi Chhatra Dal (JCD) cadres yesterday threatened a Jahangirnagar University (JU) correspondent with death as he wrote reports on their activities.

Zahidur Rahman Khan, a correspondent of the daily Jugantor, submitted the report on the JCD cadres who did not pay to a shop owner on the campus for the meal.

Angered by the news published in the Bangla Daily, a group of JCD cadres led by Rezaul Kabir Sabuj, president of Kamal Uddin hall JCD, Joni, Mukta and Akram issued the death threat to Zahid.

The Jahangirnagar University Journalists' Association and the Bangladesh Manobadhikar Sangbadik Forum condemned the JCD threat.

Child-lifter

FROM PAGE 12

court framed charges against her on October 23 last year.

Twelve out of 18 prosecution witnesses were cross-examined during the trial.

Special Public Prosecutor Akhteruzzaman appeared for the state while advocate Hafizuddin stood for the accused.

Ahad murder

FROM PAGE 12

Police Station on the same day.

The investigating officer (IO) of the case pressed charges against 13 people on June 13, 2001.

The court framed charges against the accused on March 19 last year and trial began two months later on May 18.

Of the 13 accused, 11 including Zakir alias Kargali Zakir are now in custody while Abu Taleb Rana is on bail and Abdur Rouf is absconding.

Pakistan, China agree on N-plant

PTI, Beijing

China yesterday said it has reached a "consensus" with its long-term ally Pakistan on the construction of this nuclear power plant (in Pakistan). This nuclear power plant is in full compliance with the peaceful purpose. This is very clear," she said at a regular ministry briefing.

"Both sides have reached consensus on this aspect," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue told reporters when asked to comment why the much-talked about multimillion dollar deal was not signed on Monday after talks between Chinese President Hu Jintao and his visiting Pakistani counterpart Pervez Musharraf in Beijing.

While Zhang remained elusive on the nature of the "consensus" reached, she asserted that the Sino-Pakistani nuclear cooperation was only for

peaceful purposes.

"China and Pakistan have conducted consultations on the construction of this nuclear power plant (in Pakistan). This nuclear power plant is in full compliance with the peaceful purpose. This is very clear," she said at a regular ministry briefing.

On Monday, China and Pakistan signed seven agreements and a joint declaration after Hu and Musharraf met for the first time since the latter became Chinese president and General Secretary of the ruling Communist Party of China.

Pakistan's official media had reported during the weekend that an agreement on Chinese assistance in the construction of a 300 megawatt nuclear power plant in Chashma was among the agreements to be signed during Musharraf's visit.

Terror attack

FROM PAGE 12

Western targets in the kingdom during Ramadan, which started last Monday, and urged their nationals to avoid traveling to the country.

The interior minister said the kingdom was taking such warnings seriously and welcomed any information from US and British authorities that could help their crackdown.

Nayef told the paper that during Monday's clash, Saudi police had arrested six militants believed to be linked to Saudi-born al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden. Police arrested four of the militants and two others handed themselves over, he said. One of the four was wounded.

Asked if the attacks had been aimed at buildings, crowded areas and Makkah pilgrims, he said: "This is exactly what I mean. In Makkah there are only Muslims from inside and outside the kingdom. There no other people except Muslims."

"Certainly (they wanted to target) buildings, installations and people. All the seized weapons indicate such a plan."

Ramadan is the holiest month of the Islamic calendar, when Muslims abstain from food and drink from dawn to dusk. Analysts say the heightened religious fervor of the period appears to encourage extremism.

Asked if those arrested were al-Qaeda members, Nayef said: "Without a doubt they all belong to the same group and are using the same methods."

Saudi Arabia has mounted a crackdown on militants loyal to bin Laden, held responsible for the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on US cities in which 15 of the 19 suicide plane hijackers were Saudi nationals.

The kingdom arrested 600 suspects after suicide bombings in Riyadh in May which killed 35 people, including nine

Americans.

During Monday's clash police seized automatic rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, pistols, explosives, ammunition and passports from the suspects' car and the house where they were hiding, a Saudi statement said.

Al-Riyadh said four of the detained militants were Saudis, five were Egyptian and one from Chad.

Nayef said questioning of militants in custody had helped the authorities foil plots and arrest more militants, and said that militants who surrender would receive guarantees of lenient punishment.

There have been several bloody clashes between security forces and militants in the absolute monarchy, Islam's birthplace, which is under intense US pressure to destroy al-Qaeda cells.

Last month, Al Jazeera television broadcast tapes it said were from bin Laden in which he pledged more suicide attacks inside and outside the United States.

Traffic jam

FROM PAGE 12

establishments from Motijheel, Dilkusha, Gulistan, New Market overhead footbridge, Teachers' Training College area, Mirpur Road, Shyampur and Konapara in Demra.

The courts also removed wayside illegal structures from Kataban Road, Green Road, Panthapath and Satmasjid Road and Arambagh, Motijheel and Fakirpool areas yesterday, a home ministry press release said.

Raids against adulterated food and faulty weighing stones were also on, it added.

State Minister for Home Lutfozzaman Babar said yesterday, "We are determined to ease further traffic congestion in Dhaka."

2 more US troops

FROM PAGE 12

Sunday the second worst day overall for the Americans of the conflict. At least 20 US soldiers were wounded.

Meanwhile, gunmen shot dead a prominent Iraqi judge outside his home in the northern city of Mosul on yesterday, a day after another judge was kidnapped and killed in the south of the country, police said.

A witness said a car with tinted windows suddenly pulled up outside the home of Ismail Youssef, a judge in Mosul's appeals court, at about 7:45 a.m. (12:45 a.m. EST) and men got out and shot him several times in the chest and side, police said.

The 60-year-old judge's family said they did not know why he had been attacked. Some judges with links to ousted president Saddam Hussein's Baath party were fired after the US-led war, but Youssef remained on the judge's bench.

"He was a good and honest man. He wasn't a member of any political party," his brother-in-law Tarik Moussa said.

A lawyer who worked with Youssef said he had not been involved in investigations into former Baath party leaders.

On Monday, a senior judge in the southern city of Najaf was kidnapped and killed by what his deputy said were gunmen carrying out the orders of Saddam.

Aref Aziz said he was kidnapped along with Mohan Jaber al-Shoueli on Monday. Aziz said he was released after Shoueli was shot dead.

"The gunmen said they were carrying out a judgment from Saddam," Aziz told Reuters.

Police in Najaf, a holy Shi'ite city, said they were investigating the killing of Shoueli, who had been leading probes into several local officials who served under Saddam.

Iraq has suffered a surge in violence, with many attacks occurring in Baghdad and an area of western and northern Iraq where ousted president Saddam Hussein draws much support and opposition to the US-led occupying forces runs high.

But tension has also soared in

Karbala, which was the scene of fierce armed clashes between Shiite groups in mid-October.

Two Iraqis died there late Monday when a bomb exploded near the Baratha hotel behind Al-Mukhayyam mosque, according to witness Ibrahim al-Juburi.

In mid-October supporters of Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani clashed with backers of radical cleric Moqtada Sadr, preventing the latter from taking control of the city's Hussein and Abbas mausoleums. At least one person was killed.

Sadr has been vocal in denouncing the US-led occupation but in a surprising announcement this week, he urged US troops in the oil-rich country to unite with the Iraqi people to avoid more bloodshed.

"It is important to avoid spilling blood, aggression, wars and terrorism to sanctify the fraternity between the two peoples," said Sadr, who comes from a long line of revered clerics.

"The Iraqi people only want good for the Americans because the enemy of Iraq is only the destroyer, Saddam Hussein, and his loyalists, with whom we will have no tie until Judgement Day," the firebrand cleric said.

An increasing number of Iraqis have been caught in the crossfire as anti-US forces become bolder and better organized in their assaults.

In the northern oil province of Kirkuk a bomb exploded close to a police station Monday, a mortar shell exploded in a schoolyard and a truck carrying concrete security blocks for the coalition was set ablaze, police said.

On Monday night three mortars hit Baghdad, one landing at a US army facility. There were no casualties reported, the US-led coalition said.

On Tuesday, US troops were still searching for pieces of wreckage of a military helicopter that was shot down two days earlier, killing 16 soldiers, near the flashpoint town of Fallujah, west of Baghdad.

Eight Humvees were at the scene and two helicopters hovered overhead. "The cleaning up is still going on," a US soldier said.