

MINORITY REPRESSION
HC asks govt to explain why victims shouldn't be compensated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued a rule on the government to explain why it should not be directed to award compensation to the victims of minority repression after 2001 elections.

It also asked the government to explain within three weeks why its inaction and failure to protect the religious minorities and their properties should not be declared illegal.

The rule came following a writ petition filed as public interest litigation by Human Rights Congress for Bangladesh Minorities President Advocate Rabindra Ghosh and Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh Executive President Advocate Manzil Murshid.

The respondents of the rule are home secretary, cabinet secretary, inspector general of police (IGP) and additional IGP (administration).

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Iran set to ignore UN's nuclear freeze call

AFP, Tehran

Iran's top nuclear official vowed yesterday that the clerical regime would press on with uranium enrichment work despite mounting international pressure to freeze its sensitive nuclear activities.

"Why should Iran suspend its research activities?" Ali Larijani, the head of the Supreme National Security Council, was quoted as saying by the official IRNA news agency.

Enrichment can be extended from making reactor fuel to the production of warheads, but Larijani branded a UN Security Council demand for a suspension by April 28 as "not rational".

"One should not follow such propositions... which are not rational," he said, adding: "Iran will follow its nuclear programme with patience."

Last Tuesday Iran announced it had successfully enriched uranium

to the level needed for reactor fuel, reigniting fears that the hardline regime would soon acquire the technical know-how to make bombs.

The deputy head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation, Mohammad Saidi, also argued that the UN nuclear watchdog had failed to find any proof that Iran's programme was anything other than a legal effort to generate electricity.

"Therefore there is no need to continue a suspension," he told the Etemad-Melli newspaper.

"These countries have to accept the reality and realise they are talking with a country that masters this technology and wishes to develop it," Saidi said.

The five permanent members of the Council -- Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States -- plus Germany meet in Moscow Tuesday to discuss the issue amid a US push for robust UN action.

In Tokyo, a foreign ministry official also said Japan will send a senior envoy to Iran by the end of the month to urge it to stop uranium enrichment -- following up on similar efforts by China and International Atomic Energy Agency chief Mohamed ElBaradei.

"We advise them not to repeat past mistakes... so that a reasonable atmosphere is created to follow up the negotiations," Larijani said of the suspension demands.

He also dismissed a proposal by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who has called on the Security Council to adopt a resolution which could allow the use of force against Iran.

"Such statements are not new and will not affect our determination," he said.

Larijani also implicitly confirmed comments by hardline

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DU probe into first class galore stalls

DU CORRESPONDENT

The investigation of an unusual incident where 52 masters degree examinees of the political science department at Dhaka University (DU) in 2004 secured first class marks saw only a little progress since the formation of the probe committee.

Very slow progress of the investigation gave rise to uncertainty among the concerned about the committee's seriousness about submitting a report.

The seven-member committee, later turned into a ten-member one, has yet to submit its report although the date for that has been expired at least a month ago.

Talking to The Daily Star a number of teachers of DU alleged that some influential members of the committee chose to dilly-dally with the investigation.

Citing examples of most of the investigation committees at DU formed on various issues that did

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PHOTO: STAR

Rapid Action Battalion using sniffer dogs searches the capital's Paltan Maidan to ensure security for the Jubo League grand rally there today.

Bangla Bhai's wife gives info on Udichi office attack

JAHANGIR ALAM, Netrokona

Netrokona police extracted important information from Bangla Bhai's wife about the suicide attack on Udichi office at Azahar Road in Netrokona last December 8.

Netrokona magistrate's court on April 10 placed Fahima Chowdhury, the wife of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) second in command Siddiqui Islam Bangla Bhai, on a 10-day remand.

Sources said during remand Fahima said one Kawser Alam Yunus of Tangail took the bomb to Netrokona which was later exploded in front of the Netrokona Udichi office. She also said Asaduzzaman Ponir, arrested earlier in Mymensingh, helped the suicide bomber but she refused to give the name of the suicide bomber.

She said she wrote all the JMB letters sent to different persons of the banned organisation. All operation maps were made with her knowledge, she told the police.

"I am very proud that I am the wife of Siddiqui Islam who is the soldier of Allah and tried to establish the rule of Allah," she said.

Officer-in-charge (OC) of Netrokona Police Station Samiul Alam told The Daily Star during

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PHOTO: STAR

A Wasa underground pipeline at Kataban intersection in the city cracked a week ago flooding the street. The pipeline is yet to be repaired.

JCD men confine college principal for admission of their party men

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

The activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) yesterday confined the principal of Nilphamari Government College in his office along with some teachers allegedly demanding admission of their party men in the honours course.

The college authorities claimed that the leaders of ruling BNP's student wing became disappointed when the authorities refused to follow their list for admission in the first year honours course under National University this year. The process of honours admission was going on according to the merit list, they added.

The college unit JCD brought out a procession on the college campus in the morning and chanted slogans against the authorities. Later the JCD leaders confined the principal and the teachers of Political Science department in the principal's office for two hours.

The teachers' association of the college sat in an emergency meeting at 1:00pm at the principal's chamber regarding the incident.

In the meeting the head of the Political Science department Khaleda Islam alleged that the JCD leaders demanded 50 out of 100 seats, which the authorities refused to fulfil.

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14-party won't sit for talks if Jamaat men kept in govt side

Hasina tells Mujibnagar Day discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the 14-party opposition combine would not sit for any dialogues with the government on electoral reforms with Jamaat-Islami men at the table.

She said this while addressing a discussion meeting at the city's Diploma Engineers' Institution as part of the countrywide Awami League (AL) programme to observe the Mujibnagar Day.

"Jamaat is the main patron and originator of militancy in the country and a discussion with them means discussing with militant kingpins Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai," she said.

The first ever government of Bangladesh took oath at Baidyanathola mango grove in the border district of Meherpur. The place was later renamed as Mujibnagar as a tribute to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who was declared president of the country and supreme commander of the armed forces.

Hasina also bitterly criticised the ruling coalition for destroying all ideals achieved through the Liberation War.

Senior leaders of the AL including Syeda Zohra Tajuddin, Abdur

Hasina also referred to the ban on gathering around the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and said the government will not avert its downfall by unleashing police on people.

"Tyranny of the government has been defeated in Kansat and it will happen wherever it tries to oppress the democratic movement of the people," Hasina, also the AL chief said.

She asked the law enforcers to decide whether they would stand beside the people or continue to protect the corrupt regime.

On the reforms in caretaker government and Election Commission (EC), Hasina said the government is reluctant to accept the reform proposals as they have vote rigging in mind. She vowed to materialise the reform proposals on caretaker government and the EC with a united movement.

Hasina also bitterly criticised the ruling coalition for destroying all ideals achieved through the Liberation War.

Senior leaders of the AL including Syeda Zohra Tajuddin, Abdur

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Tel Aviv suicide bomber kills 9

AFP, Jerusalem

Nine people were killed and dozens wounded in Israel's commercial capital Tel Aviv yesterday when a Palestinian militant blew himself up in the deadliest suicide bombing of the last 20 months.

The attack took place hours before the swearing in of the new Israeli parliament following last month's election won by the centrist Kadima party of Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.

The blast struck next to a fast food stand at around 1:45 pm (1045 GMT) in the southern Neveh Sha'anon district, close to the site of Tel Aviv's old bus station. The area has been the

scene of several previous attacks, including one in January.

The attack -- the deadliest since a suicide bombing in August 2004 -- was claimed by the Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad, which has been behind all of the most recent bomb attacks in Israel.

Moderate Palestinian Authority president Mahmud Abbas condemned what he called an act of terrorism while Olmert vowed that Israel would react in the "necessary fashion".

The Palestinian militant group Hamas, which recently formed a new government following its upset victory in January elections, laid the blame at Israel's door, calling it a natural consequence of its "aggressive

scene".

But the White House said there could be "no excuse or justification" for what it described as a "despicable act of terror".

Medical sources said eight people were killed in the blast, plus the 16-year-old bomber who had been wearing an explosives vest. Three of the victims died of their wounds in hospital.

Bystanders near the scene of the attack vented their fury, with one shouting: "This is an embarrassment to the state of Israel. Where is the army? People are dying -- where is the response?"

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DEMAND FOR GAS Hartal called in Rajshahi today

RU CORRESPONDENT

Rajshahi Gas Andolon Parishad called for a dawn-to-dusk hartal in Rajshahi today for supply of gas through pipeline.

The hartal was scheduled for yesterday, but it has been shifted due to the Mujib Nagar Day.

The parishad demanded supply of natural gas through pipeline before the end of the tenure of the present government.

Rajshahi Awami League (AL) led

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Bombs found at shrine

BDNEWS, Comilla

Five bombs were recovered from the shrine of Hazrat Ainuddin Shah at Kaliajuri in Comilla yesterday.

Police said that a youth netted a packet of sweetmeat while fishing in a pond of the mazar in the morning. Five bombs wrapped with red tape were found inside the packet.

Prayer Timing		
April 18		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-35	5-10
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-24	6-28
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

Nepal deploys army to ensure food delivery

Govt threatens with state of emergency, another protester killed

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal deployed the army to ensure food reaches the capital and threatened to impose a new emergency yesterday, the 12th day of a strike in which neither the king nor the opposition is backing down.

After political parties declared economic war on King Gyanendra with food and fuel shortages biting, the government took action and the information minister warned of a further crackdown.

"The army has been deployed to escort the trucks carrying food into

Kathmandu from Sunday," home ministry Gopendra Pandey told AFP.

"Some trucks have already arrived in the capital," he said.

Drivers were offered a bonus if they were prepared to break the general strike, said Dhurva Kumar Sharma, spokesman at the ministry of labour and transport management.

"We are providing 48 dollars per driver and 21 dollars for drivers' helpers for ferrying food into the capital," said Sharma.

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Sonia owns no car, has only Rs 20,000 in cash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Indian Congress President Sonia Gandhi owns no car and the money she holds in cash is just Rs 20,000, she declared yesterday in a statement.

Sonia has a Rs 13 lakh ancestral house in her country of origin Italy, according to the declaration she submitted along with her nomination paper for the election in Rae Bareilly constituency in Uttar Pradesh.

The worth of Gandhi family's jewellery is Rs 21.66 lakh and her share as mentioned in the declaration shows she owns 2518.450

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PHOTO: STAR

Indigenous Rakhaine women in Cox's Bazar yesterday spray water at men during Shangrai Poo, a water festival, as they celebrate the Bangla New Year.

Tigers suspend Swiss truce talks

Lanka blasts kill 8

AFP, Colombo

At least eight people were killed and many more wounded in a spate of blasts in Sri Lanka yesterday, hours after Tiger rebels suspended their participation in ceasefire talks, the military said.

The latest deaths raised to 64 the number of people, mostly police or troops, killed in bomb attacks in the past week in the latest surge of violence linked to the decades-old Tamil separatist conflict.

On Sunday night the rebels said they were suspending their participation in talks set to take place in Switzerland next week on saving a shaky Norwegian-arranged truce that has been in place since February 2002.

Five of those killed were soldiers who died when a powerful Claymore landmine exploded near their truck in Vavuniya district, a military official said from the town of Vavuniya, 260km north of Colombo.

Seven soldiers were wounded in the attack, which the official blamed on Tamil Tiger guerrillas.

"They blocked the truck by driving a three-wheeler (taxi) across the road," he said. "Within a few seconds the three-wheeler exploded."

Another Claymore mine exploded further north in the Jaffna peninsula, killing the man who was carrying it and two others, a military source said.

Early investigations indicated the device was being set up to target a military convoy but had exploded prematurely, the source said.