

Premadasa's secret force disbanded

PUTTALAM (Shri Lanka), May 24: Sri Lanka's new government has closed the secret police force that the late President Ranasinghe Premadasa used to suppress his opponents, reports AP.

Premadasa, who was assassinated May 1, ran a government so authoritarian that he often didn't even allow his own Cabinet ministers to make decisions during his four years as president.

But that appears to be changing as well since Parliament elected Prime Minister Dingiri Banda Wijetunga, a top Premadasa ally and much less autocratic politician, as his successor.

Ranil Wickremasinghe, a Premadasa aide who Wijetunga appointed as Prime Minister, the No. 2 position, says the government is changing the way Premadasa ruled, but not his programmes.

"The economic and social policies will be the same, but there will be a change in the style of the government. We will depend on ministers to do the work, while the administration is decentralised," he said in an interview on Sunday.

Colombo recently sealed off the National Intelligence Bureau office of the 4-year-old secret police force in the National Housing Development Authority building.

The force had about 50 retired policemen, customs and excise officers who tapped telephones and prepared secret files on politicians, businessmen, newspaper publishers and reporters.

Businessmen who were placed on the police unit's black list stopped receiving loans from state banks.

Wickremasinghe said the new government would continue Premadasa's social programmes, especially those aimed at reducing the poverty affecting almost half the nation's 17 million people.

But there will be no major change in the government's military strategy against Tamil rebels fighting for independence in eastern and northern Sri Lanka, he said.

In the last two years, the military has been driving the guerrillas out of many parts of eastern Sri Lanka, even though they still control most of the north.

"Getting the Tamil people to participate in the 1995 national election would be a victory for us," Wickremasinghe said.

About 18,000 people have been killed in the 10-year-old war between rebels from Sri Lanka's Tamil minority and the government, which is controlled by the Sinhalese majority.



Nobel prize-winning physicist Professor Abdus Salam called on President Abdur Rahman Biswas at the Bangabhaban yesterday. — PID photo

Salam suggests more funds for uplift of science

Nobel laureate physicist Prof Abdus Salam yesterday suggested larger allocation of funds by the government for development of science and technology in Bangladesh, reports UNB.

"More emphasis should be given on science and technology for achieving developmental goals," the visiting scientist said during a meeting with President Abdur Rahman Biswas at Bangabhaban.

Prof Salam said he felt honoured in meeting President Biswas and expressed his gratitude to the Dhaka University for conferring on him a Doctor of Science (DSc) degree.

"We feel proud of you and by honouring you we have, in fact, honoured ourselves," Biswas told Prof Salam.

"Your contribution to science would be remembered for all," he added.

The President also said it was a great pleasure for him to meet an eminent person of knowledge and erudition of Prof Salam's stature.

Education Minister Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar, Prof Nasim Khalilur Rahman, a noted scientist and close associate of Prof Salam, Ataul Haq, Secretary to the President, and Abdullah Haroon Pasha, Secretary, Science and Technology, were also present.

Govt college teachers serve ultimatum

Government college teachers yesterday gave the authorities until June 7 to meet their demands or they would go on strike, reports UNB.

Their demands include retrospective effect for teachers affected by the direct promotion of others as Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and Professor following seven years of effective service, improvement of the standard of education by creating posts in 233 colleges — and 57 colleges in particular — joining of new lecturers by June 7, filling all the vacant posts, and implementation of the resolutions taken in different meetings with government authorities.

The ultimatum came from the Bangladesh Government College Professors' Association and Lecturers' Association.

In a statement, they warned that the teachers would start strike on June 8 and a non-strike on June 17 if their demands were not met by then. They also threatened to boycott the forthcoming HSC Examinations, beginning June 17.

The action programme includes two hour token strike beginning June 8 from 10 am with the teachers wearing black badges, three-hour token strike from June 12 from 10 am and an indefinite strike from June 17 if the demands are not met by June 15.

The associations alleged that the government was reluctant in fulfilling the 12-point demands even after their continued agitation and submission of memoranda to the government.

Criticising a tangle among several ministries, the statement said the Education, Establishment and Finance ministries were creating "uphill problems" instead of resolving the problems of the teachers during the last 10 years.

The teachers sought intervention of the Prime Minister, the Education Minister, the Finance Minister, the State Minister for Education and the State Minister for Establishment in removing the deadlock immediately.

JCD protests BCL activities during convocation

Different students' organisations staged demonstrations on the Dhaka University campus and in the city yesterday protesting alleged terrorism by the Chhatra League during Sunday's special convocation, reports UNB.

Leaders of the Jatityabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), at a rally in front of the Jatitya Press Club, accused the opposition Awami League and its student wing of resorting to destructive activities to jeopardise hard-earned democracy.

Rasputin's diary found

MOSCOW, May 24: Archivists have found the diary of Grigory Rasputin, the Siberian mystic whose virtually unlimited control over Czarina Alexandra led to his murder by noblemen, reports AP.

The diary provides firsthand information on the life of the court of Czar Nicholas II, ITAR-Tass said Monday.

The text was scrawled in an ordinary school notebook and the handwriting is that of an uneducated man, said David Raskin, an employee of the State Historical Archive in St Petersburg. He said the diary would be published.

Yevgeny Belodubrovsky, a librarian at the private St Petersburg Cultural Fund, confirmed the discovery in an interview with The Associated Press. He said further details would be released soon.

Rasputin lacked a formal education but supposedly possessed hypnotic powers. He claimed to be able to work miracles, and Alexandra was drawn to him out of concern for her son, Alexei, a hemophiliac.

His influence on her was great, and she consulted him on various state matters, including the appointments and dismissals of high-ranking government officials.

Rasputin's mixture of religious fervour and sexual indulgence led many outside the court to grumble.

The Midnight File

No country treats women better than its men

WASHINGTON, May 24: United Nations researchers are gathering information about the world's women, and so far they have not found a single country that treats its women better than its men. Only 33 countries now keep enough gender-based statistics to make comparisons, according to Mahbub ul-Haq, head of a UN project that tries to chronicle human development, reports AP.

Benazir unfolds her party's 7-pt economic agenda

KARACHI, May 24: Pakistan's former premier Benazir Bhutto unfolded her party's seven-point economic agenda today for the July 14 elections, promising to continue the privatisation policy. Addressing members of the Pakistan Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (PFCCI) here, she said: "There will be reorientation in the policy of privatisation to ensure greater transparency and wider ownership, particularly for workers and members of the middle class," reports AP.

Malaysia bans 7 brands of foreign mineral water

KUALA LUMPUR, May 24: The government announced Monday a ban on sales of 11 brands of mineral water, including seven imported from Italy, Indonesia, Oman and India. Health Minister Lee Kim Sai said the bottlers were found to have violated Malaysian food laws and ignored the ministry's health standards concerning the sources of water, chemicals, bacterial content and radioactivity, reports AP.

Student killed in clash

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The clash began when the college students raided the market exploding crackers and pelting bricks.

Hundreds of students, who marched towards the market in a big procession, broke the window panes of the road side shops, hurling stones and bricks, witnesses said.

They also damaged a car parked in front of the shopping centre.

The students alleged that hired goons of the shopkeepers also fired shots at them.

Earlier, the students on Sunday attacked and assaulted the shopkeepers and the members of the Ansars damaging five cars in front of the market.

Belayet, a platoon commander of the Ansars force, who sustained severe head injury Sunday, is being treated at the IPGMR. He is stated to be in a critical condition.

Abdul Quayyum Bhuiyan, general secretary of the Century Arcade Shop Owners' Association, said, "As usual we opened the shops in the morning but all on a sudden the students attacked us at around noon."

Helaluddin Helal, president of the association, said, "The Home Minister, when we called on him Sunday evening to inform him of the incident, assured us that legal action would be taken against the persons responsible."

The president alleged that some students of the college regularly disturbed the shop-owners demanding tolls. Lately, the students sent a letter to the shop owners asking for money, he added.

Police resorted to baton charge to bring the situation under control.

Our DMCH Correspondent reports: Fatally wounded Kawsar was immediately rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) from where he was shifted to the Suhrawardy Hospital at around 1 pm in a critical condition.

Kawsar succumbed to his injuries at the hospital at around 2:30 pm. His body was sent to the DMCH morgue for autopsy yesterday evening.

Attending doctors declared that Kawsar died following excessive bleeding.

Meanwhile, the college students brought out a procession protesting the killing and demanding punishment to the 'killers' yesterday afternoon.

Nazrul's birthday today

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BTV and Radio Bangladesh will broadcast the inaugural function live from the academy. State Minister for Cultural Affairs Prof. Jahannara Begum will preside.

The national programme includes musical soiree, dramatic poetry recitals and dance drama, a Nazrul fair and exhibition of different mementoes of the National poet.

The Ministry of Cultural Affairs will hold a three-day discussion at the National Museum auditorium starting today.

UNB adds: In a message on the eve of the occasion President Abdur Rahman Biswas paid tributes to the 'Rebel' poet, saying he had always been vocal for the cause of the wretched — the helpless, the exploited and deprived people. "His powerful writings will inspire independence-loving people for years to come."

The President said the poet had raised his voice against injustice, falsehood, repression and slavery.

"He infused confidence and valour in the people of this country an their glorious struggle for freedom. He was an omnipresent conscience in the march for establishing legitimate rights."

President Biswas said the literature of the poet would ever inspire us in putting democracy on a firm footing, changing the lot of the deprived people and improving the condition of women and the socio-economic condition of the people.

"We can pay the best tribute to the poet through fulfilling basic rights of the people. So, all our efforts should be continued by sinking difference to rid the nation of poverty and illiteracy."

In a separate message on the occasion, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said an epoch-making poet, outstanding composer and maestro with an unparalleled struggling life, Kazi Nazrul Islam enriched Bengali literature and socio-cultural heritage.

"Bengali language, literature and songs were given diverse dimensions through the multi-faceted genius of Nazrul. He gave a new direction."

She said he had struggled against injustice and misdeeds and upheld the cause of the exploited, oppressed, deprived and poor masses.

Nazrul was a poet of liberty, a vanguard of Muslim renaissance in the Sub-continent and an outstanding composer upholding communal harmony, she said. His poetry, songs and other writings inspired us in the Liberation War and the recent anti-autocracy movement.

The Prime Minister said Nazrul would be our source of inspiration in the efforts for poverty alleviation and maintaining liberty and sovereignty.

She urged all to follow the ideals of the poet and stand against injustice and falsehood for building a happy and prosperous society.

In a message, Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina said poet Nazrul enriched Bengali literature and culture through his creativity,

talent and bold writings.

Nazrul was a conscious Bengalee, socially and politically. His literary works ignited revolutionary spirit in the thoughts of the Bengalee nation. He was one of the pioneers of the anti-imperialism movement and of the Bengali renaissance in this Sub-continent.

She said the rebel poet had returned to Dhaka on May 24, 1972, at the invitation of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The poet was given state honour and members of his family were provided all facilities for their stay here. The then Awami League government also planned to publish all his books, Hasina added.

"The best way to pay respects to poet Nazrul is to continue the struggle against all forms of injustice, repression and exploitation."

Hasina hoped that Nazrul literature would again inspire the Bengalee nation to struggle for establishment of their rights.

Meanwhile, the Nazrul Academy, Dhaka will observe the day with laying of wreaths at the mazar of the poet. The Academy will also organise Nazrul birthday celebration at the Engineers' Institution in Chittagong.

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Blast kills 17 soldiers in Kashmir

NEW DELHI, May 24: At least 17 Indian soldiers were killed by a powerful blast in a remote frontier region of Kashmir, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported today, reports AP.

Fifteen other soldiers were seriously injured in the explosion, which occurred Sunday within an army firing range at Leh, which borders China, the news agency said.

No further details were available.

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(GEC) were also over seeing the salvage operation.

The aircraft is insured with the Sadharan Bima Corporation and re-insured with the Lloyds for 65 million dollars. Mannan said the salvage operation will cost about Tk 50 lakh which will be borne by the insurance companies.

He said a flight engineer has been co-opted in the six-man enquiry commission, constituted soon after the accident. The International Civil Aviation Organisation and Federal Aviation Authority have also been requested to send their representatives to be included in the enquiry commission, which is expected to submit its report within a month.

Also present at the Ministers press briefing at the Biman Airlines Training Centre (BATC) were Parliament Members Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Alam Khan, Rahima Khandaker, and Ataur Rahman Khan, who are also the members of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Civil Aviation and Tourism.

35 injured as train hits cart in Jamalpur

JAMALPUR, May 24: At least 35 passengers fell from a running train and were injured, six critically, when it crashed against a loaded bullock cart left on the Daripara level-crossing in Sadar thana today, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the passengers, most of them hanging from door handles, fell when the over-loaded 254 local train hit the paddy-loaded cart at about 11 am.

Of the injured, 18 were rushed to Jamalpur General Hospital and six to the Myrmensingh Medical College Hospital.

The conditions of the six, admitted to MMCH, were stated to be critical.

Ctg Jubo League, BCL condemn police attack

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, May 24: Hundreds of supporters of the Chhatra League and the Jubo League this afternoon marched through the city streets here to voice their protest against the alleged police attack on their rally at Darul Fazal Market and a ban on their scheduled rally in front of Muslim Institute Hall on Sunday afternoon. The marchers demanded the trail of the persons responsible for assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975.

They also demanded the immediate release of party activists who were arrested from Sunday afternoon's procession.

RUTA demands removal of VC, pro-VC

By Staff Correspondent

The Rajshahi University Teachers' Association (RUTA) yesterday demanded immediate removal of the VC and pro-VC of the university accusing them of being partisan, corrupt and autocratic.

At a press conference at the National Press Club last evening, RUTA alleged that violence on the campus and irregularities in the administration had increased immensely since Prof M Anisur Rahman's appointment as acting VC in July '92.

The press conference, addressed by Prof Abu Bakar Siddique, was attended among others by RUTA president Prof M Kayes Uddin, joint secretary Ananda Kumar Saha, Dr Moazzem Hossain, Dr Aftab Alam Khan and Munshat Manzurul Haque.

Referring to the violent incident of February 6 last in which five students were killed and 200 injured in clashes between the Islami Chhatra Shibir and other student organisations of the RU, the RUTA said that such incidents could have easily been avoided had the VC taken precautionary measures suggested by the RU Syndicate and RUTA.

The teachers' association said that the Syndicate and RUTA had both warned the VC of the possibility of violence on the campus on that day but the VC ignored their suggestion for deploying the paramilitary BDR.

"After such incidents," the RUTA members said, "the RU authority should take the responsibility of the tragic deaths and therefore the VC and the pro-VC should resign or be removed."

The RUTA also mentioned that the committee formed by the Syndicate to probe that incident could not yet begin its activities because the VC was reluctant to cooperate.

The RUTA also accused the VC of taking sides, and alleged that he tried to secure the release of six Shibir activists who were arrested for their criminal activities in the February incident.

The RUTA presented some instances of the VC's 'autocratic' activities and said that he had appointed and promoted many teachers by-passing the Syndicate and rules of the university.

The VC was also misusing university property and funds, the RUTA alleged.

The RUTA strongly demanded that the Chancellor should remove the VC and the pro-VC and a new VC should be elected under the University Act, 1973 which they said, "would surely bring back a healthy environment in the university."

They also demanded trial and punishment of those responsible for the February incident.



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