

AG against any new blasphemy law

By Staff Correspondent

Attorney General Aminul Haq yesterday urged all to resist the enactment of any new blasphemy law, saying that the demand for such a law was "an effort to send us back to the dark ages."

He observed that the draft of the law devised by a "certain" quarter contradicted the basic rights ensured by the Constitution.

Addressing a seminar organised by the Law Review of the Dhaka University Law Department and the Coordinating Council for Human Rights in Bangladesh, the Attorney General said that since religion was essentially a matter of one's faith, no law could ensure its practice.

Pointing out that this proposed blasphemy law, seeking the death sentence for anyone convicted of blasphemy, also contradicts the teachings of Islam which preaches a philosophy of tolerance of different faiths.

The seminar, presided over by the president of Law Review Dr Mizanur Rahman, was participated by Deputy Attorney General Hasan Arif, Prof Anu Muhammad, vice president of Law Review Asif Nazrul, Hafez Moulana Ziaul Hasan of the Islami Biplabi Andolan, Barrister Lutfor Rahman Shahjahan and Advocate Ozair Faruq.

Javed Hasan Mahmud and Sayera Rahman of the Review presented the keynote paper on "The Anti-democracy and Human Rights Blasphemy Law: A Review."

"Those who have the least idea about true Islam, democracy and human rights, have devised the law," Aminul Haq said.

Describing some clauses in ICDDR,B team arrives in Goma

An eight-member medical team from the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B) reached Goma, Zaire on Tuesday to provide assistance for the control of cholera epidemic among the Rwandan refugees, reports UNB.

Sponsored by USAID in Washington, the team includes experts in epidemic control, clinical management, water and sanitation, and environmental microbiology, says a press release yesterday.

Head of the Epidemic Control Preparedness Programme of ICDDR,B Dr A K M Siddique led the delegation. Other members of the delegation are: Dr M A Salam, Dr K A H M Akram, Dr M K Biswas, Dr R N Mazumder, Dr M S Islam, Dr Sandra Laston and Nancy Fronczak.

The medical team is doing rapid assessment of the epidemic, and advising on strategies for control and management of the epidemic.

Businessmen

From Page 1 Col 7 They felt that the country is being held hostage by some political parties and this has been affecting the investment climate.

President of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) Abdur Rob Chowdhury, talking to The Daily Star yesterday, said the politicians have every right to go for any democratic agitation but they should also care for the socio-economic development of the country.

Commenting on the Opposition agitation for unseating the government, he said "This is not the right norm (to wage street agitations) for the removal of a democratically elected government. The Opposition should go to Parliament and seek to change the government through democratic means."

Former president of the DCCI M Yunus said that after the 1991 elections the country was presented many opportunities for a quick take off to prosperity but these could not be seized because of the failure of the political leadership.

"It is like a good soccer match without any goals," he said.

"It is clear that the audience is not getting much fun out of this play."

Yunus said the politicians should by now have enough foresight to imagine the country's situation if the economy does not grow.

"It is the youth who in the past had compelled the politicians to join the anti-autocracy movement and forced them to come to their senses."

Mosharrar Hossain, former president of the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters' Association (BGMEA), said the politicians should come to a consensus on the political irritants for the sake of the economy.

"They can very well go ahead with processions and rallies, but should shun frequent hartals," he said. "Once this becomes a culture, all governments will have to face the same problem."

Chapter 15 of the Bangladesh Penal Code, Aminul Haq said. "Only the government can take legal action — which is two years in jail — against anyone hurting religious sentiments."

He pointed out that Pakistan followed the same penal code but in 1991 it added the provision of capital punishment for blasphemy.

Describing briefly the history of the spread of Islam in the world, Deputy Attorney General Hasan Arif pointed out, "Nobody had ever framed a law in order to make people follow Islam forcibly. Only Allah can punish someone for committing an offence against Islam. Human beings have no right to interfere there."

Hasan Arif termed the proposal for a blasphemy law "childish" and said, "It is like a revolver pointed at my head, forcing me to be a Muslim. If I have not become a practising Muslim in the last forty years — no law can make a true Muslim out of me."

He said Pakistan passed the blasphemy law in '91 because the rulers wanted to use it as a political tool and added that the quarter which was vocal for a similar law in this country had similar intentions.

Prof Anu Muhammad, describing the dangers of such a law, said that it could be abused to interpret anybody's statements as blasphemous.

"In Pakistan, riots among the Shia and the Sunni sects followed the passing of the bill. The same would happen here," Anu Muhammad warned.

He said, "The Jamaat-e-Islami and its fundamentalist allies themselves have differences of opinion on this issue. They would use the law against each other as well as against the Ahmediyas or Qadianis against whom they have already made several attacks."

The keynote paper highlighted the development of blasphemy law in the Middle Ages in the churches and concluded that such law was used as a tool to control society by the church. The paper said, in recent years, Iran and Pakistan, by adopting anti-blasphemy laws, had violated the universal declaration of human rights.

The paper further said that the Jamaat MPs were proposing amendments to Sections 295 B and C of the Penal Code providing for life imprisonment, fine or death for blasphemous activities.

Gunmen take 40 bus passengers hostage in Russia

MINERALNIYE, Russia, July 28: Four masked men with hand grenades and pistols seized a bus with about 40 passengers in the Caucasus Mountains of southern Russia on Thursday afternoon, authorities said, reports AP.

They were demanding 15 million American dollars and a helicopter, said Valentin Yudaikov, spokesman for the Federal Counterintelligence Service.

Journalists to boycott CMP

From Staff Correspondent CHITTAGONG, July 28: The journalists here have decided not to publish any news of the Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) in protest against the police attack on them at a rally of the APSU on Wednesday.

The boycott will continue until the CMP commissioner offers an apology and takes steps to punish the police personnel, responsible for the attack on the newsmen.

The decisions came at a meeting of the journalists at the Chittagong Press Club.

PM

From Page 1 Col 8 on others. But today they are earning and marching towards self-reliance," Begum Zia said while addressing a gathering of women of the Barisal Mohila Sangstha at her Hare Road office last night.

Presidents and general secretaries of some 45 small women's associations of Barisal district were present at the function.

The Prime Minister advised the rural women to work hard and set up poultry and dairy farms and plant trees for changing their lot.

Referring to various development programmes for women, she said the government had introduced free education upto Class Ten as well as stipend for the girls to ensure their education.

The function was also addressed by State Minister for Children and Women's Affairs Sarwar Rahman, President of the Jatiya Mohila Sangstha, Selima Rahman MP, Mujibur Rahman Sarwar MP, Dr Shahida Rafiq, Begum Masuda Hossain and district leaders Prof Bilkis Jahan, Prof Laila Bashir, Reza Begum, Monwara Begum and Nurun Nahar Bakul



The Sampradayikata Birodhi Chhatra Samaj, an alliance of student bodies, brought out a procession bearing black flags in the city yesterday protesting the killings in Chittagong on Tuesday.

Jahanara Imam foundation set up

By Staff Correspondent

The well-wishers and the son of Jahanara Imam have decided to form a "Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam Foundation" to preserve the works of the Nirmul Committee leader and writer.

Saif Imam Jami, son of Jahanara, yesterday told The Daily Star that the foundation, which would be a non-political organisation, would help preserve some 27 books written by Jahanara and also uphold the ideals of the leader who died of cancer last month.

The foundation will be run from the royalties of my mother's books," he said. Jami, who has settled in the USA, decided to set up the foundation to promote the ideals of the freedom fighters.

He told The Daily Star that the foundation would also collect, compile and publish the literary works of Jahanara and make these available to the public at reasonable prices. It would also support the women of Bangladesh in developing their entrepreneurship since Jahanara always spoke for progress of women in the country.

On Wednesday night, an 11-member committee of the foundation, headed by Jami, was formed. The other members of the committee include Shamsul Haq Chisty, Akku Chowdhury, Shahadat Chowdhury, Habibul Alam, M A Aziz and Shahidullah Khan.

Jami, who came to Dhaka with the body of his mother from the States earlier this month, will be leaving the country today (Friday) but would continue to guide the foundation from abroad, he said.

About the Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee's agitation initiated by Jahanara Imam, Jami said, "I believe the spirit which had been aroused by the movement will not easily die down."

He thanked the people for the sympathy they have shown to him following the death of his mother.

Sit-in at Sylhet called off

From Our Correspondent SYLHET, July 28: The indefinite sit-in organised by the Nastik Murtad Pratirodh Andolon here ended at 1:30 pm today after 36 hours.

The organisers of the sit-in called off their programme on the plea of joining the 'long march' tomorrow.

They also called for a day-long hartal on August 9 to press the demand for immediate release of 24 teachers-students of Kazirbar and Subhanighat Madrassahs of Sylhet.

The teachers and students were earlier arrested on charge of damaging the car of Jute Minister Hannan Shah on July 1 in Sylhet.

Teachers' demand

From Page 1 Col 8 others of different departments of the university.

In a separate statement, the Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers Association denounced the killings in Chittagong and blamed the government as well as police and BDR for their alleged failure to maintain law and order.

The federation demanded trial and punishment of those responsible for the killings. The Bangladesh College University Teachers Association also expressed concern over the incidents in Chittagong.

A statement issued by the president of the organisation, Dr M Akhtaruzzaman and general secretary Shaful Alam criticised the government for allegedly appointing the anti-Liberation elements to the top posts of the Education Department.

Hartals suicidal for economy: Saifur

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday regretted the hartal call on July 30, the date for SAARC foreign ministers' conference, reports BSS.

Speaking at a function organised by the employees of the Finance Division at the conference room of the Ministry of Finance, the Finance Minister described the disruptive activities like hartal as suicidal for economic development and said: "If we commit suicide, none can help us."

He said the present government under the leadership of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has succeeded in creating a smooth atmosphere for massive economic activities including investment during the last three years and a half.

Dwelling on the political activities during the last week, the Finance Minister said such activities in the name of hartals were pushing the country towards a state of suffocation.

He said all our efforts for improving the condition of the people would go in vain if we continue to resort to such disruptive and negative activities.

The function, marking the installation ceremony of the office bearers of the sub-committee of the Finance Division under Bangladesh Secretariat Karmachari Sangjukta Parishad and Eid reunion, was also addressed by the State Minister for Finance, Mojibur Rahman, Finance Secretary, Nasumuddin Ahmed, and Additional Secretary, Motahar Hossain.

BNP reaction

From Page 1 Col 7 said. About Tuesday's incident in Chittagong, he said "It was the outcome of an unholy entente."

BNP standing committee member and Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah told The Daily Star that a particular party or group could not remove the BNP government which came to power with the people's mandate.

"The people will decide in the next elections who will rule the country," he said. "Such one-point demands betray a total disregard of Parliament and democracy."

He said the BNP has 174 members in Parliament while the major opposition parties have a total of 149 members. "So how can they form a caretaker government by dislodging the ruling party," he asked.

Rafiqul Islam said that the AL chief was looking for a way to go to power. "But how can she go to power without the people's verdict?"

The AL demand — to unseat the BNP government on the one hand and form a caretaker one on the other — is self-contradictory, the BNP leader said.

Koirala

From Page 1 Col 4 were still working out a strategy today for the removal of the interim premier and the formation of a new government to ensure free and fair elections in November.

Nepal Communist Party (United Marxist-Leninist) Chairman Mana Mohan Adhikari, who had forged an alliance with disgruntled NC stalwarts against Koirala only last weekend, said their turnaround was "an act of betrayal and treachery."

Students shift

From Page 1 Col 5 The meeting, presided over by Belal Chowdhury, was attended by Moinuddin Hasan Chowdhury, Ragib Ahsan Munna, Abdullahil Quayum, Sajjad Zahir Chandan, Ahad Ahmed, Moshrefa, Mishu, Mozaffar Hossain Zakir, Abul Fatah Sabuj, Md Shahidullah and Suranjana Ghosh.

The Chhatra Samaj also held a rally at the foot of the Aparajeo Bangla statue at Dhaka University yesterday protesting the killing of six persons in Chittagong last Tuesday.

NGO activities: Allegations refuted

The NGO Affairs Bureau has refuted allegations that certain non-government organisations (NGOs) indulged in anti-religious activities.

"We have no knowledge of any NGO engaged in anti-religious activities anywhere in the country," Director General of the NGO Affairs Bureau M A Mannan told UNB yesterday.

"Let them come up with specific instances," Mannan said when his attention was drawn to widespread allegations by some religious leaders against certain NGOs.

Sammilita Sangram Parishad, a combine of Islamic groups and parties, is organising a "Long March to Dhaka" today with demands that include a ban on certain NGOs for indulging in anti-religious activities in the villages.

The NGO Affairs Bureau, operating under the Prime Minister's Secretariat, is empowered to supervise, audit, evaluate and approve funding of all NGOs, most of which are Western-aided.

Mannan said permission to an NGO is accorded after clearance by concerned ministries, including the Home and the Religious Affairs ministries.

Activities of all NGOs across the country are closely monitored by the local government bodies and district administration as well. The district administration every month send reports on the activities of the NGOs to the Bureau, he added.

The Director General said 839 registered NGOs have been operating all over the country. Of them, registration of 33, including 10 local and 23 foreign NGOs, have so far been cancelled for indulging in irregularities. But he did not give any details.

When his attention was drawn to a recent statement by a senior government official, the Director General said the NGOs posed no threat to the administration as the local government bodies and the district administration are closely supervising their activities.

Additional Secretary of the Economic Relations Division Mohammad Shahidul Alam is reported to have told a seminar in the city earlier this month that the NGOs, backed strongly by the donors, posed a serious threat to the public administration.

Alam, who headed the NGO Affairs Bureau from May 1991 to September 1992, held a section of the bureaucrats responsible for supporting the NGOs for their personal gains.

Dr Kamal

From Page 1 Col 7 taneously to protest the Jamaat chief and 'planner of 71 genocide' Golam Azam's plans to address a public meeting, he said but regretted that the government had protected Azam from the people's wrath.

The renowned lawyer said the government had violated the Constitution by misusing the police and BDR forces to protect 'war criminal' Golam Azam and shelter the armed terrorists of the Jamaat.

He also blamed the Jamaat for forming a private army in violation of the country's Constitution. He further alleged that the Jamaat had decided to destroy independent Bangladesh with the use of unauthorised arms, and quoted witnesses as saying that the party was training up its armed cadres in Cox's Bazar.

Dr Kamal asked Golam Azam to compensate for the killings and injuries in Chittagong which he said had all happened because of Azam's 'wrong politics'.

"By God, I shall realise compensation from Golam Azam," the GF leader promised, saying that he would seek help of the law.

He also warned those collaborating with the Jamaat in the name of a greater struggle for realising the demand of elections under a caretaker government.

Replying to a question, Dr Kamal viewed that "sick politics" in the country had encouraged Golam Azam to resume his anti-people and anti-liberation politics. More people would have to shed their blood unless Golam Azam's politics was resisted, the commented.

GF leader Major Gen (ret'd) Khalilur Rahman also spoke on the occasion.

Walima of Abul Hasan MP held

Begum Abu Sayeed Chowdhury held a walima reception last night on the occasion of the wedding of her eldest son Abul Hasan Chowdhury, MP at the Officers' Club, reports BSS.

Abul Hasan Chowdhury, son of former president Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury, was married to Nahid Chowdhury, youngest daughter of Dr Mesbahuddin Ahmed Chowdhury.

The reception was attended by ministers, Members of Parliament, diplomats, judges of the Supreme Court and High Court, high officials, journalists and elite of the city.

The Midnight File

Another North Korean defects to South

SEOUL, July 28: A North Korean trade company official defected to South Korea today in the latest of a series of defections by North Koreans, Seoul's intelligence service announced, Kim Dong-Hun, 42, smuggled himself into the western port of Incheon through a third country, it said, reports Reuter.

10 die as police, Naga rebels clash

GUWAHATI, India, July 28: Ten people died in a seven-hour gunbattle today when Indian police raided a camp run by Naga militants, police said. Nine guerrillas of the outlawed National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) were killed in the raid at the camp at Kangpokpi, eight km from Imphal, capital of the northeastern state of Manipur, reports Reuter.

Serb parliament rejects peace plan

BELGRADE, July 28: The self-proclaimed Bosnian Serb parliament wound up a special session on an international peace plan today and said it was sticking to its previous position demanding more details, reports AFP.

In a statement, it said it was willing to take part in negotiations with members of the "contact group" — Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States — but had "decided to maintain its positions" stated last week, which were widely viewed as tantamount to a rejection of the peace blueprint.

AP adds: The United States is pressing its allies for a tougher approach to the Bosnian Serbs, including an acknowledgment that there is a limit to how long they can continue denying arms to the Muslims.

Dainik Janata laid off

The Dainik Janata was officially declared laid off yesterday, reports UNB. A notice signed by its editor Dr Muhammad Asadur Rahman was submitted to the Director of Labour, the Deputy of Commissioner of Dhaka and the officers-in-charge of the Motijheel and Tejgaon thanas.

The notice said the management of the Bengali daily was compelled to declare layoff in all divisions — editorial, news, reporting and proof — as the situation had gone beyond control following the firing of some journalists earlier last week.

The layoff will continue from July 28 to August 3 and all employees of the newspaper will get their payments as per rule.

Leather

From Page 1 Col 7 can take this opportunity for promoting export of leather to those countries, he said.

The minister said that the government was considering imposition of ban on the export of crust and finished leather to encourage production of more leather goods in the country.

Emphasising the need for 'prioritising the export goods', Mahbubur Rahman said despite the potential of the leather sector, earning from export of leather and leather goods is still insignificant. All efforts should be made to develop this potential sector and increase the export earning, he said.

He suggested increasing the incentives for exporters of leather products. The exporters of wet-blue leather should be given assistance for exporting finished leather.

Abdur Rob Chowdhury said the quality of leather products and finished leather has to be improved. Training programmes should be organised for the tanners to help them produce quality leather, he added.

Dr Karam Ali of a UNDP-sponsored leather and leather goods expansion project and Syed Nasim Manzur, Director of Apex Tannery Group, presented papers at two working sessions of the seminar.

তিতাস গ্যাস ট্রান্সমিশন এন্ড ডিস্ট্রিবিউশন কোম্পানী লিমিটেড

(পেট্রোলিং একটি সাবসিডিয়ারী কোম্পানী)

ফোনঃ ২৮১১০৬, ২৮১১০০, ২৮৪৪৬২, ৮১২৩০৪-৪২।

বিশেষ জরুরী বিজ্ঞপ্তি

অত্র কোম্পানীর মতিবিলম্ব কার্যালয়ের জরুরী গ্যাস নিয়ন্ত্রণ কেন্দ্রের দুরালাপনি নম্বর পরিবর্তন হইয়া নিম্নরূপ হইয়াছেঃ

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সমানিত গ্রাহকবৃন্দকে গ্যাস সংক্রান্ত যে কোন জরুরী প্রয়োজনে উপরোক্ত পরিবর্তিত দুরালাপনি নম্বরে সার্বক্ষণিক যোগাযোগের জন্য অনুরোধ জানানো যাইতেছে।

ইহা ছাড়াও গ্রাহকদের সুবিধার্থে কেন্দ্রীয় বোতর কক্ষের দুরালাপনি নম্বর ৩২৩৫১৪ দিব্যরাত্র চালু রাখিয়াছে।

"গাছ লাগান,পাছের পরিচর্যা করুন এবং পরিবেশ বাঁচান" — প্রধানমন্ত্রী

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