

Major parties backing terrorists: Dr Kamal

By Staff Correspondent

President of Gano Forum Dr Kamal Hossain has said the steps for recovery of illegal arms have so far remained inadequate and alleged that arms supply to terrorists in different constituencies were still on.

"The people expect the non-party caretaker government to take stern and effective steps to recover illegal arms and eliminate terrorism", Dr Kamal said at a press conference at the Forum office in the city yesterday.

"But the major parties are backing terrorist groups. None of these parties has taken any step against their own terrorist cadres," he added.

"If any quarter tries to obstruct the arms recovery drive, the government should expose that quarter before the people," he said.

A code of conduct should be formulated for all parties participating in the coming elections to control the activities of the candidates, ensure security prevent the use of black money and to check communal activities.

The Gano Forum chief urged the caretaker government to make radio and TV fully autonomous organisations so that he pointed out they could play the proper role in freeing the society from communalism, terrorism and unhealthy politics.

He noted that unless the illegal arms were recovered, holding free and fair elections would not be possible.

Dr Kamal called for an united political platform consisting of all major political parties believing in "secular Bangladeshi nationalism" spirit of the liberation war, progress and democracy.

He said that such unity of the major political parties was a must to ensure "arms-free healthy politics in the country."

To prevent the use of black money in the elections, Dr Kamal said, bank loan defaulters must be debarred from contesting polls, and the expenditure of the candidates on campaigns should be strictly monitored.

He alleged that some parties were polluting the political atmosphere by spreading communal hatred. Some other parties were harming the country's foreign policy by campaigning against certain countries for narrow interests.

The press conference was also attended by Kamal Haider, Zeaul Haq, Mostafa Mohsin Mantu, Zahidul Islam, Pankaj Bhattacharjee and Saifuddin Ahmed Manik.

A former secretary, M Maniruzzaman, and a lawyer of historic Agartala case, Vikharul Islam Chowdhury, announced their joining Gano Forum at the press conference.



The fire victims at the Nikhet Babupura slums are living under the open sky. — Star photo

Gunmen kill 18 tourists in Cairo

CAIRO, Apr 18: Four attackers sprayed a crowd of tourists with gunfire at a hotel near the pyramids today slaughtering 18 and wounding 20 in the worst massacre of foreigners in four years of unrest in Egypt, reports AFP.

Three gunmen armed with Kalashnikovs and a woman with a revolver fired on the holidaymakers at point blank range outside the Europa Hotel on the road leading to the Giza pyramids on the outskirts of Cairo.

Most of the casualties in the carnage were Greek tourists on a visit to Middle East holy sites, the official news agency MENA said.

Two killed, 10 hurt in city incidents

By DMCH Correspondent

At least two persons died and ten others injured in separate incidents in the city yesterday.

An unknown male who was crushed under the wheels of a truck near Sutrapur bridge at 2 am yesterday, died in the morning at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Abul Hossain, 35, resident of Bhasantek area was pronounced dead by DMCH doctors when he was brought with serious injuries he received after falling from a tree.

Three persons were admitted to the DMCH with bullet wounds. They sustained injuries during a clash in Sutrapur Sweeper Colony area. They are Anwar Hossain, 25, Babu, 26, Mazharul Islam, 28.

Shamim, 18, and Kausar, 20, from Hasnabad area under Keraniganj thana were admitted to the DMCH. They were injured in a clash between two groups of terrorists in the area.

Rubel, 18, was injured when terrorists threw a powerful bomb at Dhanias Bazar.

Terrorists beat up Giasuddin, a shop owner of Peer Yamini Market, in afternoon in front of Baitul Mukarram Mosque.

It was learnt that some mastaan had claimed a big amount of money as toll and he had refused to pay.

Local mastaan beat up Nazrul, 16, an employee of a grill shop in Jatrabari area. He was admitted to DMCH with serious injury.

Haider Ali a guard of a garments factory located at the Tejaon Industrial Area was seriously beaten up by a group of terrorists when he prevented them from entering the factory.

Keeping of SC judges' posts vacant challenged

By SC Correspondent

A writ petition has been filed before the High Court Division challenging the withholding of appointments or keeping of the existing positions of judges of the Supreme Court vacant by the executive of the Republic.

Dr. Mohiuddin Farooque, Secretary General of the Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA), filed the writ yesterday against the Secretary, Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs representing the Government of Bangladesh.

The petition prayed for a rule nisi calling upon the respondent to show cause as to why the withholding of and/or failure to appoint judges to all the vacant positions of both the Divisions of the Supreme Court shall not be declared ultra vires to the Constitution and law and, as such, the same is arbitrary, mala fide and without any lawful authority.

The petitioner also sought for a direction to fill up all the vacancies to the positions of judges immediately.

The petition referred to the reports published in The Daily Star and the Sangbad on April 4 last. It was said that 13 judges positions out of 40 in the High Court Division and one out of five positions in the Appellate Division are lying vacant, whereas, about 72,000 cases in the High Court Division and around 2,000 cases in the Appellate Division remain pending.

The Midnight File

Clinton in Russia for N-safety summit

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia, Apr 18: US President Bill Clinton arrived in Russia today for a two-day nuclear safety summit in Moscow with other world leaders. Clinton's plane touched down at St. Petersburg Airport at 10:25 pm (1625 GMT), reports Reuters.

F-16s: Pakistan may take US to court

ISLAMABAD, Apr 18: Pakistan may take the United States to court to settle a dispute over a failed deal to sell F-16 fighter jets to Islamabad, the foreign secretary said today, reports AP.

There is a legal option here and all ways of resolving this are being considered. Foreign Secretary Najmuddin Sheikh told reporters.

Although Pakistan several years ago paid for dozens of US-built F-16s, the United States, which later halted the sale, has yet to return the money or deliver the planes.

Sheikh was responding to recent reports that Pakistan might file a case against the United States at the International Court of Justice at The Hague over the F-16 deal.

The US Congress in 1990 introduced legislation that blocked the sale of military hardware to Pakistan because of suspicions Islamabad was developing nuclear weapons.

A deal for 71 F-16 fighter jets was thwarted due to the punitive congressional measure.

"We either want to get the planes, or get the money for them," Sheikh said.

Transfer

Deputy Commissioner Md. Abdul Huq in the Ministry of Cultural Affairs as cultural adviser.

Besides, the government has transferred Madaripur Deputy Commissioner Md. Moslem to the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, Rangamati Deputy Commissioner Md. Kamaluddin to the Roads and Railways Division, Moulvibazar Deputy Commissioner Md. Abdul Matin to the Ministry of Industries, Khulna Deputy Commissioner Md. Mujibur Rahman to the office of the Chief Adviser, Jessore Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Ali Akhand to the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Industries Deputy Secretary Abu Zafar to the Ministry of Cabinet Division, OSD in the Establishment Ministry Md. Shaheb Ali Mridha to the Ministry of Land and Nature Deputy Commissioner Azizuddin Ahmed as Director in the BCS (Administration) Academy.

Bank looted in Mirersharai

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Apr 18: A group of gunmen attacked the branch of the Agrani Bank in Dargapur area under Mirersharai and looted a cash of Tk 1,76,000 after confining the staff into a room at noon today.

Police said the gunmen reached there by a microbus, barged into the bank and fled hurriedly with the cash.

The gunmen also opened gun fire at the time of fleeing, police said.

Eight projects

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ings in Rajshahi Division, Taka 31 crore and 86 lakh for establishing satellite schools, Taka 139 crore and 55 lakh for rehabilitation of the existing gas turbine power station at Haripur and Taka 22 crore for maintenance and rehabilitation of silos in Dhaka, Chittagang, Narayanganj, Ashuganj and Santabar.

Besides, Taka 170 crore have been earmarked for University Grants Commission and development of universities. Taka 7 crore and 50 lakh for expansion of pisciculture at Thana levels and Taka 11 crore for rehabilitation of the railways.

At the out set of the meeting, the Chief Adviser outlined the importance of economic discipline side by side with maintenance of law and order for a healthy and strong economic condition in the country. He stressed for austerity and bringing dynamism in the economic activities of the country.

Habibur Rahman said the main objective of the caretaker government was to hold a free and fair elections. "But we also want to present a stable economic system to the next elected government," he added.

JCD leader

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Dal (JCD) unit.

Police sources said Mizan was murdered by an unidentified group on Tuesday night.

Mizan, son of Zafar Ahmed Siddiqui of village Mirzanagar under Begumganj thana in Noakhali district, shared a room with his friend Babu, on the first floor in the tin-shade house of one Shahjahan.

The room was locked since early Tuesday night. Yesterday morning, the neighbours informed Tejaon police after getting a bad smell from the house. Police entered the room breaking the lock and found Mizan lying dead on his bed.

Babu remained absconding since Tuesday night, police said.

Other than a mark of injury on his eyebrow, police could not trace any other wounds on the decomposed body of Mizan.

Zakir Hossain, elder brother of Mizan, filed a case with Tejaon Thana in this regard. None was arrested so far.

Meanwhile, DUCSU VP Amanullah Aman and JCS Khairul Kabir Khokan, GD president Fazul Haq Milan and Secretary Nazimuddin Alam in separate statements last night condemned the killing and alleged that a terrorist group backed by Chhatra League had killed Mizan, convener of JCD Polytechnic Institute unit.

They demanded immediate arrest and punishment of the persons responsible for the killing.

Power crisis

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less power against its capacity of 196 MW while the Haripur centre remains closed during the off-peak hours. It operates only in the peak hours.

According to the PDB, out of the present generation capacity of 2229 MW, the total gas-based generation capacity is 1720 MW. "As the gas supply has fallen, naturally the power generation has been affected," said an official.

Two gas pipelines — the Ashuganj-Bakhrabad Gas Pipeline and the Belabo-Narsingdi Gas Transmission Line — will augment gas supply to the power generation system when they will be completed in mid-1997.

Till then, said a senior official, the scarcity of gas will continue and some urgent interim measures should be taken to meet the present requirement of power shortage which is seriously affecting industry and irrigation.

Train accident

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some 240 kms (150 miles) from Lucknow, the capital of the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, the news agency said.

PTI quoting officials said the Gorakhpur-Gonda passenger train was en route to Lucknow.

The victims included railway employees. The injured were rushed to a railway hospital and other hospitals in the district, the news agency said.

Police and railway officials had reached the site of the accident, PTI said.

It was the worst railway accident in India since last August, when 350 people were killed when one train crashed into another at Ferozabad in the same state, near the tourist town of Agra.

8 dacoits caught in Comilla

COMILLA, Apr 18: Eight dacoits were caught red handed while they were preparing to commit a dacoity at Sheluri village of Chowddagram thana in the district in the early hours today, reports UNB.

Police said a gang of dacoit numbering about 17 to 18 were planning to raid the residence of Tajul Islam of the village.

Sensing the presence of the miscreants, villagers gathered the dacoits and apprehended eight of them. They also recovered a pipe gun with three bullets from their possession.

Fifteen people, including eight dacoits, were injured during the melee.

ESCAP survey

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About the performance of the economy in 1995, the ESCAP survey said GDP grew by five per cent in 1995 from 4.5 per cent in the previous year and remained below the target of seven per cent needed for poverty alleviation.

Fertiliser crisis and the drought hit the agricultural growth which remained at 2.6 per cent against 1.8 per cent in 1994, the survey noted.

Small-scale industries registered a strong growth of 3 per cent, but large-scale enterprises, like textiles and chemicals, were less dynamic, it added.

Unesco office

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the main mission of the Unesco office in Dhaka would be to contribute towards sustainable human development in a culture of peace, tolerance, democracy and human rights, through programmes and projects in the organisation's fields of competence.

Unesco Dhaka will work in close collaboration with its headquarters and field offices and liaise with the Bangladesh National Commission for Unesco, the government and the relevant public and private institutions including NGOs.

The main focus of activities through its Dhaka office in the near future will continue to be on the promotion of education for all, sciences in the service of development, preservation of cultural heritage and socio-cultural values, creativity, communication and free flow of information, the press release added.

Salam

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The BNP leader said: "The main task of the caretaker government is to run the country impartially during the interim period and hold a free and fair election."

He requested the government to refrain from any activities which will destabilise the situation.

BNP office secretary Nazrul Islam Khan, former mayor Mirza Abbas and former MP Afzal H Khan were present at the press briefing.

Hasina: Next polls

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suing central (party) leaders for nominations in the elections. Go to your areas, tell people we were in power for only three and a half years and remained outside power for the over last 20 years. Meet people in their homes and tell them to give Awami League a chance to serve for one more time," Hasina told some 1,500 party delegates gathered at yesterday's extended meeting from across the country.

After listening to the observations of over two hundred division, district and thana level leaders for hours together since mid-day yesterday, Sheikh Hasina made her hour and a half summing up deliberation at 8:30 pm.

She also warned them not to bring out victory procession within 48 hours of election results and not to be over enthusiastic, even if the party wins.

Turning to the issue of party nominations, Sheikh Hasina recalled the experience of the 1991 election saying, "at that time at least 30 to 40 people had sought AL nominations but we refused considering sacrifices of our leaders and workers, for whom we always feel proud, and later they got BNP's nominations and eventually came out successful."

She urged the grassroots level leaders to remain united in throwing support to the party nominees in the elections and said, "Yes, of course we will evaluate your sacrifices. But, at the same time we have to care much about each and every seat."

"You have to accept the selections of the parliamentary board regarding nominations. Mind it, Awami League must be victorious this time unless we want more repressions on us," said Hasina.

Hasina revealed that she herself sent special teams to every nook and corner of the country to survey time and again since 1991 the popularity positions of all prospective nomination seekers.

"It does not matter who gets the party nomination or who doesn't. You have to understand it clearly that our goal should be to win the max-

Water issue major hurdle in promoting ties with Dhaka, says Pranab

AGARTALA, Apr 18: The Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee today said that sharing of Ganges water was the major hurdle in the improvement of the bilateral relations between India and Bangladesh, reports PTI.

Mukherjee told a press conference here today that the issue of rail communication through Bangladesh to link and locked Tripura was taken up by him in 1993. But Bangladesh had ruled out any discussion on any issue unless the Ganges water issue was resolved.

Any problem with Bangladesh could be solved by bilateral discussions, he said and added that if trade and commerce between the two countries could be improved it would benefit both the countries.

JP grand rally in city Apr 23

A grand rally of the Jatiya Party will be held at Manik Mia Avenue in the city on April 23 demanding release of its Chairman Ershad. A joint meeting of JP and its front organisations yesterday reviewed the preparatory activities of the rally with the party Acting Chairman Huzairur Rahman Chowdhury in the chair. Representatives from Dhaka, Gazipur, Munshiganj, Narasingdi, Narayanganj, Jamalpur, Mymensingh, Tangail, Kishoreganj, Netrakona, Brahmanbaria and Comilla attended the meeting, said a press release, reports UNB.

AL draft polls manifesto

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Hasina listened to problems and prospects of the party's field-level units from the party leaders who came from districts and thanas. She gave them some tips to counter political opponents' propaganda against AL.

Earlier, a report on party activities since the last extended meeting held on January 27 was presented by party General Secretary Zillur Rahman.

The meeting began an hour behind the scheduled time of 10 am with recitations of verses from religious holy books and reading out of a list of obituary references by party's Joint Secretary Abdul Jalil. The participants in the meeting also kept standing and observed one minute's silence in remembrance of those who sacrificed their lives during the "two-year movement for establishing peoples' rights."

The 21-point AL draft manifesto pledges to arrest 'deteriorating' law and order with a heavy hand and launch a 'war' against corruption at all levels of the administration. It also pledges providing subsidy to agriculture sector, setting up of agro-based industrial units with scope for large scale employment generation, separation of the judiciary from the executive, depoliticisation of the administration, autonomy to electronic media and privatisation of the Trust newspapers and the state-run news agency.

Besides, the AL manifesto stressed among other issues, decentralisation of the administration by establishing strong elected local bodies at district, thana and union levels, introduction of Kudrat-e-Khuda education commission report, setting up health complexes in every union, prioritisation of

Absolute poor

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strategy on poverty alleviation.

The study recommended promotion of economic growth and employment opportunities in secondary and rural towns and villages to discourage rural-urban migration.

Cooperation among the government, municipalities and NGOs was also suggested by the study to jointly address the urban poverty.

Addressing the workshop, ADB Resident Representative Bhanuphol Horayangura said the Bank was now reconsidering to expand its assistance programmes to urban areas in view of worsening state of urban poverty.

He said the ADB was currently processing the Urban Poverty Reduction Project envisaging programmes including slum improvement and housing for the poor, urban primary health care and urban employment creation programmes.

Horayangura said the ADB had recently started preparing an Action Plan to institutionally strengthen the Pourashavas to help the urban local government to deliver services to the urban poor.

Planning Secretary Dr Shah Md Farid presided over the inaugural session. C. Sals, academicians and representatives of different donor agencies attended the workshop.

Taka devalued

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41.85 instead of the earlier Taka 41.60.

With the latest revision, the sixth in the current fiscal year (1995-96) and the second under the caretaker government, a unit of greenback has become 0.60 per cent costlier against the Taka.

This downward revision was made to adjust with the changes in exchange rate relationships among the major currencies in the international market and also to maintain competitiveness of Bangladeshi exports, sources in the central bank said.

Appreciation of Taka against the neighbouring country's currency was considered by the country's exporters as a major obstacle in maintaining competitive edge.

The last adjustment was made on April 8, 1996, when the Taka was adjusted downward by 0.50 poisa. Following revaluation of the Taka by 15 poisa on March 7, 1995, it was devalued thrice earlier by 15 poisa against the dollar on September 12, 1995, 25 poisa on October, 1995 and 25 poisa on January 8, 1996.

During the last calendar year, the local currency was devalued by 1.61 per cent against the greenback compared to almost 14 per cent depreciation of the Indian Rupee and eight per cent devaluation of the Pakistani Rupee.

Female education, repeal of the Enemy Property Act, development of physical infrastructure, revival of the spirit of liberation war and 'Bangladeshi nationalism', modernisation of the armed forces and pursuing a foreign policy on the basis of 'friendship to all and malice to none'.

Elaborating the issue of independence of the judiciary, the AL president said that during her recent talks with the Resident Representative of the World Bank in Dhaka she had "already sought financial support from the Bank to meet the enormous cost of separation of the judiciary from the executive."

Responding to queries from the delegates, Hasina said if voted to power, her party would realise the just share of the Ganges water from India and the country's dues from Pakistan. She sought suggestions in writing from the party rank and file which might be incorporated in the manifesto.

The AL chief told party leaders of grassroots level: "They (opponents) propagate that if people cast votes for AL, the country would be sold out to India. But, you must try to make people understand that they, not we, had compromised our sovereignty by making Bangladesh a market for Indian products. Khaleda (former prime minister) had signed a joint communique during her trip to India allowing it to push back Indians into Bangladesh."

"Just compare the trade balance of Bangladesh and India during our time and during BNP's period. Tell people that if they want Bangladesh to come out of India's influence, they can easily prefer to cast votes for AL."

The party which brought freedom for the nation can

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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