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Allocation for places of worship to be raised

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday witnessed a lively discussion on government's fund allocation for places of worship during the question hour.

In the absence of State Minister for Religious Affairs Moulana Md Nurul Islam, State Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Syed Abul Hussain replied to the written questions and the supplementaries.

The state minister assured the House that the present government would sanction money for mosques, temples and all other places of worship without any discrimination and would consider raising the allocation from Tk 50,000 now to Tk one lakh to each member of parliament for development of religious places in their constituencies.

Replying to a supplementary question from Shamsul Haq, a ruling Awami League member, Abul Hussain informed the House that during the BNP rule, two ministers concerned sanctioned maximum funds for religious places in Gazipur and Patuakhali, the two districts they hailed from.

He also informed the House that two hill tracts districts — Khagrachhari and Rangamati — were at the bottom of the list during the last five years as regards getting the grant.

Some ruling party MPs alleged that the previous BNP government had politicised allocation of funds for places of

worship. Some of them gave figures to substantiate their points that how mosques situated in the constituencies of the then Opposition MPs were deprived of government grant.

Opposition lawmakers protested the allegations and former BNP minister Abdul Moyeen Khan said that his constituency Palash thana was also deprived of such grant.

Replying to a question raised by AL MP Mirza Azam, the state minister told the House that Tk 2.90.19.500 and Tk 2.74.98.500 were granted for mosques in the country during 1994-95 and 1995-96 respectively.

Answering another question raised by Jamaat-e-Islami lawmaker Moulana Delwar Hussain Saidee, the State Minister Abul Hussain said that during the last five financial years the mosques received Tk 14,50,95,200 as grant while 3,525 the Hindu temples got Tk 1,07,17,800, 450 Buddhist temples Tk 37,22,000 and various Islamic organisations got 1,19,84,000. He, however, could not give the total number of mosques in the country.

BNP MP Khurshid Jahan Haq raised a supplementary question and said that in Dinajpur district Saontal community has its own places of worship but those did not get any government grant. The state minister assured her of taking the matter into consideration.

Nine more villages in Rajganj, Kamarkhand, Tarash and Ullapara thanas were submerged as water levels of the tributaries of Jamuna — Karata, Boral, Phoolgori and Gumarri — continued to swell. Standing corps on about 300 acres of land went under water in the areas.

Meanwhile, the Disaster Management officials said 22 people lost their lives as the flood hit 144 thanas of the country's 37 districts. They said 51,74,375 people of 9,72,819 families were affected by the flood while foodgrains were completely damaged on 1,43,509 acres and partially damaged on 3,41,494 acres.

The number of livestock lost in the flood was 15,433. The officials figure of completely damaged households is 1,07,716 and partially damaged 2,96,182.

While we have to wait for some more. But, as far as the inclusion of the Leader of the Opposition in the Privilege Committee is concerned, we have done it as per the convention.

A 10-member Privilege Committee headed by Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury was constituted and announced in the House on Wednesday.

Suranjit Sengupta said, "from the very first day, we started trying to contact them (BNP). Even, the Speaker rang her up while Begum Zia was touring Bogra."

He said there was no precedence of constituting any privilege committee without making Leader of the Opposition its member in Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka.

Replying to a question the Chief Whip, however, said if Begum Zia felt like that, she could nominate any other MP belonging to her party to represent her in the Privilege Committee. "Begum Zia used to nominate the then law minister of her cabinet to represent her in the then privilege committee while BNP was in power," he added.

Sengupta told a questioner Awami League would welcome a shadow cabinet as being contemplated by BNP.

When asked whether the BNP MPs be allowed to head some of the parliamentary standing committees, after necessary arrangements to the JS Rules of Procedure, Sengupta said, "Pray not."

About constitution of the Special Committee on Tuesday to scrutinise bills for a period, the PM's advisor explained, "otherwise, the bills would have to be sent to select committee, which again is headed by a minister under the present system. As the cabinet opt for ministers not heading standing committees the Special Committee was constituted."

The seized foreign currency notes were handed over to the Customs authority at the ZIA. Meanwhile, the ZIA authorities have decided to reward the security operator on duty at the post for his efficiency, the CAAB press release added.

Two nurses at BIRDEM attending a patient yesterday after their strike was called off. — Star photo

BNP boycotts JS special body meet

By Staff Correspondent

BNP yesterday boycotted the first meeting of the Jatiya Sangsad's special committee on scrutinising the bills moved in the House.

However, the committee members belonging to two other opposition parties — Jatiya Party and the Jamaat-e-Islami — attended the meeting held at the Sangsad Bhaban, meeting sources said.

When asked, Chief Whip of the Opposition in parliament Khandakar Delwar Hussain told newsmen at the parliament lobby yesterday evening that they did not attend the meeting as the BNP rejected the committee.

"We'll also decide on other JS committees in the BNP Parliamentary Party (BNPPP) meeting to be held in a couple of days," he said.

Visitors pass

Speaker urges MPs, ministers not to recommend more than one application

By Staff Correspondent

Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury yesterday requested the parliament members, whips, ministers and state ministers to refrain from recommending more than one application for issuing temporary visitors pass of the VIP as well as general visitors galleries, reports BSS.

Chowdhury said rush of visitors in the visitors' galleries were creating problems in maintaining discipline in the proceedings of the House.

The Speaker said from now on visitors pass for the VIP galleries would be issued by him. The VIP gallery one has 13 seats, the VIP gallery two 47 seats and the general galleries have 273 seats for the visitors, he said.

Retd govt official arrested for slapping constable

By Staff Correspondent

A retired Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Industries, Miah Md Yunus, was arrested from the Airport Road near Kashi Bari on charges of slapping an on-duty police constable early hours yesterday.

Cantonment police arrested the ex-government official under Section 353 of the penal code at about 1:45 am, police said.

The official had an altercation with the constable, Manjurul Huq, when the latter stopped his rickshaw on the Airport Road. The constable intercepted the rickshaw as the road was prohibited for such manually driven vehicle, police said adding that Md Yunus at one stage slapped the constable.

Later, a traffic sergeant and some police forces from the police box near the Zia International Airport rushed to the spot and picked up Md Yunus, police added.

The constable filed a case with Cantonment thana in this connection, police said.

Blue Panel

From Page 1

They are: Abul Kalam Azad Chowdhury (Dea Pharmacy), Khandakar Bazul Haq (Provost, Zahurul Haq Hall), A T M Zahurul Haq (Professor, Economics), M Abdul Aziz (Associate Professor, Chemistry), Sahid Aktar Hussain (Assistant Professor, Soil Science) and A K M Golam Rabbani (Lecturer, Islamic History and Culture).

Muhammad Shajahan Mia of Bangla Department was the only White panel candidate elected for Academic Council.

Five other members elected from Blue panel to represent the council are: Associate Professors Rafikulullah Khan (Bangla) and Sonia Nishat Amin (History), and Assistant Professors/Lecturers Ms Zinat Huda (Sociology) and M Nuruz-zaman (International Relations).

Blue panel candidate Prof Iteker Gani Chowdhury of Institute of Business Administration was elected representative to the Finance Committee.

Biman crew

From Page 1

ficer and the luggage was re-examined. Later, the notes were recovered in presence of the shift officers of different agencies working in the airport.

The seized foreign currency notes were handed over to the Customs authority at the ZIA. Meanwhile, the ZIA authorities have decided to reward the security operator on duty at the post for his efficiency, the CAAB press release added.



Two nurses at BIRDEM attending a patient yesterday after their strike was called off. — Star photo

Parliament tidbits

From Page 1

MPs were seen rushing to their respective seats. Maj. (retd) Akhteruzzaman, who was talking to Home Minister Maj. (retd) Rafiqul Islam, was yet to leave the Treasury bench area when the Speaker entered.

Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury yesterday apparently earned the confidence of the Opposition.

While guiding a debate on whether or not a Motion of Thanks on the President's address to the House be moved, Chowdhury promised to allocate equal time for both the sides and acted accordingly.

"I'll be fair in giving floor to both sides by turn," the Speaker while responding to questions on allocation of time from BNP lawmakers. As a result, the debate went on in a disciplined manner and without any interruption.

BNP lawmaker Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury seemed to have enjoyed AL MP Latif Siddiqi's speech made with a clear reference to the Chowdhury family's role in 1971. The BNP legislator was seen smiling and requesting his angry party colleagues to remain silent.

Mahbubur Rahman of the BNP in his bid to get favour from the Speaker reminded the Chair, "Once we had the opportunity to share the same Cabinet."

A visibly annoyed Speaker stopped Rahman's microphone immediately as the time allocated for the BNP MP was over.

18 HSC examinees held in city

By Staff Correspondent

Police arrested 18 HSC examinees when they went on the rampage at Bakshi Bazar in the city yesterday protesting what they said 'hard' questions in Accounting.

The angry students came out on the streets after the examination at about 1:15 pm damaged at least 15 motor vehicles and ransacked some shops, police and witnesses said.

A case has been filed with Lalbagh thana.

Motion of thanks

From Page 1

Rahman Biswas did not deliver the speech according to the advice of the Prime Minister, the BNP legislator said. "If it is true, it was the government's failure to make the President go by the Constitution." The government should, therefore, resign immediately, he added.

Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim said, it was funny that the Opposition in the name of upholding the Constitution was trying to force us to thank a president who, in violation of the Constitution, has made a speech of his own.

Mosharruf Hossain of BNP said, "Once the speech is made by the President, we shall take it for granted that he, according to the Constitution, has acted as per the advice of the Prime Minister."

Explaining the importance of traditions and conventions in parliamentary democracy, Ziaur Rahman of BNP argued that it was the obligation of the ruling party to move the motion of vote of thanks on the presidential speech, "it did not oblige us" to move a motion of thanks. "It is the Rules of Procedure that has talked about moving a motion of thanks."

Salauddin Quader Chowdhury of BNP, giving a comparative analysis of the oaths taken by the Speaker, the Prime Minister, ministers and the MPs, said that it was the obligation of the first three to "preserve, defend and protect" the Constitution of the state. "Since Article 73 of the Constitution obliges the House to discuss the presidential speech, it is the responsibility of the Speaker, the Prime Minister and the ministers to meet the obligation."

Referring to Tofael's contention that President Abdur

Cabinet body meet reviews law & order situation

The government is determined to take all necessary steps to stamp out terrorism from society and improve the city's notorious traffic jam, reports UNB.

This was informed at the first Cabinet Committee meeting on law and order situation held at the secretariat with committee Chairman Home Minister Rafiqul Islam in the chair yesterday.

The meeting reviewed the country's present law and order situation and evaluated different measures undertaken to improve order.

Committee members Industries and Commerce Minister Tofael Ahmad, Post and Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim, Education and Technology Minister AHSK Sadek, Power and Mineral Resources Minister Li Gen (retd) Nooruddin Khan and the State Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Abdul Motin Khashru attended the meeting.

Addressing the meeting the Home Minister said a Task Force has already been formed to collect suggestions from the people regarding law and order.

One to die for killing minor girl after rape

COMILLA, July 25: A man was awarded death penalty on Monday for strangulating a minor girl to death after rape, reports UNB.

According to the prosecution story, convicted Mohammad Azad, 35, of village Syedpur in Laksam thana forcibly took away Jahura Begum, 11, of the same village to a solitary place and strangled her to death after violating her on August 31, 1995.

Knowing about the brutality, the villagers caught Azad and handed him over to the police. A case was filed and police after investigation submitted charge-sheet against him.

The Additional District and Sessions Judge after examining evidences and records delivered the judgement.

JS adjourned till 3 pm July 28

Parliament was adjourned till 3 pm on July 28 after a lively business yesterday. Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury announced the adjournment at 10:05 pm, reports UNB.

Algerian plane hijack drama ends

ALGIERS, July 25: A lone gunman commandeered an Algerian jetliner shortly before it was to take off with 232 people aboard Thursday, but authorities announced an end to the hijacking several hours later, state radio reported, reports AP.

The Air Algeria Boeing 767 was hijacked at Oran Airport in western Algeria at about 9 a.m. (0800 GMT) as it prepared to leave for Algiers, the radio said, citing an Interior Ministry statement.

Manipur govt against building of Barak Dam

NEW DELHI, July 25: Manipur government is opposed to the construction of rupees 2,898 crore multi-purpose Barak Dam in the river Barak at the confluence of Manipur, Assam and Mizoram at Tipaimukh, reports BSS.

Manipur government is against the implementation of the project as the commissioning of the dam would result in inundation of 311 square kms of land in Manipur and Mizoram, said a report in today's 'The Hindu'.

If commissioned, more than 2300 people of 15 tribal families would be thrown out of their means of livelihood, the report said quoting Irrigation and Flood Control Minister Dr L Chandramani.

It said if the Barak Dam is commissioned, standing crops of 90 villages would be destroyed affecting nearly four thousand families. Chandramani is unhappy as nothing is mentioned in the rupees 200 crore rehabilitation and resettlement plan for the 90 villages. Besides, the report said, most of the national highway number 53, a lifeline of the state, would be submerged compelling the state government to construct diversion road of 150-km along the national highway.

The report said Manipur was an earthquake prone zone and in the event of any major earthquake the people in the state would be affected.

PM opens seminar tomorrow Asian experts to focus on 3 key economic issues

By Staff Correspondent

A three-day international seminar on "Learning from East Asia: Lessons for South Asia" organised by centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), will begin in the city from tomorrow.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the seminar. It will be participated by academics of international repute who have written on East and South East Asian experience or have been policy-makers or both. The seminar will also bring in senior development specialists from the World Bank and other multilateral agencies.

The core participants from Bangladesh include the present and former finance ministers or advisers along with the ministers, members of parliament, senior bureaucrats, business leaders, heads of NGOs and top professionals.

The proposed dialogue is designed to promote an intensive discussion of the critical factors contributing to the positive outcomes from the development process in East Asia," said Prof Rehman Sobhan, executive chairman of the CPD while briefing the press at his city office yesterday.

The focus of the dialogue would be on three key themes — the factors behind the high and sustained rates of economic growth, success in rapidly reducing poverty and governance in East Asia compared to South Asia, the former finance adviser added.

The dialogue, spread over five half-day sessions, would proceed posing a set of focused questions to the East Asian experts about their experience and to the South Asian experts about the transferability of this experience to the South Asian scene.

The themes of the four sessions are: sustained growth, poverty alleviation and issues of governance.

Beyond understanding the essence of the experience, the CPD chairman hoped that the dialogue would identify the relevance of those elements of the experience to the prevailing conditions of South Asia and would explore the practical lessons into the development agenda of the countries of this region.

It is expected, through exposure to this seminar, to sensitise key players in the country's policy debate to lessons from the Asian experience relevant to Bangladesh's development, Sobhan added.

Participants from East and South East Asia are: Prof Justin Yifu Lin of Peking University, Prof Dibyoo Prabowo of Indonesia Forum and Prof K S Jumo of University of Malaysia.

Hunger strike claims 4th inmate in Ankara

ANKARA, July 25: A fourth prisoner died Thursday in a nationwide hunger strike by nearly 2,000 jailed leftists, as the new Islamic-based government struggled to end the protest over prison conditions, reports AP.

The prisoner, Huseyin Demircioglu, had been arrested last March on charges of membership in an outlawed left-wing group and was being held in an Ankara prison, the semi-official Anatolia news agency reported. The other three deaths had been in Istanbul prison and Ankara.

Demircioglu was one of about 275 hunger strikers on a "death fast," refusing even sugared water. The rest of the protesting prisoners are refusing only solid food.

Another EPZ

From Page 1

secretary, planning secretary, finance secretary, executive chairman of the Board of Investment, foreign secretary, shipping secretary, secretary of the power, energy and mineral resources ministry and IRD secretary were present at the meeting.

PM's visit

From Page 1

visit after the formation of the new government, except that to Saudi Arabia where she went to perform Umrah. The proposed date is likely to be in the middle of September, sometime after the conclusion of the state visit of Turkish President Suleyman Demirel, who would be in Dhaka in the first week of September, the sources added.

An official of the Chinese Foreign Ministry said that Beijing attaches high importance to strengthening of ties between the two countries.

"We have absolutely friendly relations. We believe the new government in Bangladesh would build further upon the already excellent relationship existing between our two nations," the official added.

Participants from Europe and North America are: Dr H J Chang of Cambridge University, Prof G Ramis of Yale University, Prof Nurul Islam of UN Committee for Development Planning and Dr Robert Wade of University of Sussex.

The South Asians experts are: Dr Arjun Sengupta of the Indian Planning Commission, Ambassador Muchkund Dubey of Jaharal University, Dr S N H Nayak of Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, Senator Sartaj Aziz, former Pakistan finance minister, Dr Lal Jaywardana, economic adviser to the Sri Lanka's President, Prof W D Laksman of University of Colombo and former Nepalese finance minister Dr Devendra Raj Panday.

Participants of multilateral and bilateral organisation are: Mikeo Nishimizu, Jose Edgardo Campos, Shekhar Shah, Pirre Landell-Mills, Tercan Bayson of the World Bank, Dr M Azizul Islam of UNESCAP, B Horayangura of ADB and Dr Sabur Ghayur of FES.

Seven core participants from the host country — the present and former finance ministers or advisers — are: S A M S Kibria, M Saifur Rahman, MP, A M A Muhiut, M Sayeduzzaman, Prof Wahidul Haque, Prof Whiduddin Mahmud and Rehman Sobhan.

Atlanta

From Page 1

"You have lifted our spirits and disrupted our sleeping pattern," a reference to her compatriots staying up through the night to celebrate the swimmer's triumphs.

A subway train ran off the end of the line in Atlanta, seriously injuring the driver and adding to the Olympic city's transport woes.

Atlanta's crowded and often delayed train system has been a major headache for Olympic organisers in their struggle to get fans, competitors and the media to events on time. The loss of a train will not help.

The dysfunctional computerised results service has also been a major problem for the international media.

Atlanta's Olympic supremo, Billy Payne, apologising to the media for the glitches, admitted: "We let you down."

Olympic security officials, embarrassed to admit that an armed man got into the opening ceremony before being spotted, said Atlanta's notorious crime rate had fallen in nearly every major category during the first week of the games.

Two Spanish fencers were arrested at the Olympic Village for indecent exposure. They exposed themselves and urinated in the presence of females. They were both intoxicated," a police spokeswoman said.

Five Armenian athletes were also arrested and accused of disorderly conduct after allegedly breaking into an apartment. They had paid a \$5000 fine and were due to meet her there. The case was dismissed after she refused to press charges.

MCCI: Subsidy

From Page 1

izer instead of urea. Use of these two kinds of fertilizer would help increase productivity of soil, they observed.

They informed the prime Minister that no meeting of Board of Investment (BOI) and Export Council were held in last four and three years respectively.

The Prime Minister assured them of looking into the matter.

Responding to a suggestion, she said there would be no politicisation by her government. The past government had politicised everything hindering implementation of government decision, she said.

"I want to share everything with everybody specially the opposition for building up the country," she said and recalled her open invitation to the opposition parties for taking part in the recently held law and order workshop and pre-budget meeting.

Referring to the June 12 general election, the business leaders said that the present government had been installed through a free and fair election and people had great expectation from this government.

"We will lend all-out cooperation, you will have to be more strict in governing the country," said the MCCI chief urging the Prime Minister to meet frequently with the business community like in Sri Lanka, Malaysia, South Korea and other upcoming industrial countries.

The MCCI delegation included Manjor Elahi, Laila Kabir, Anis Ud Dowla, Latifur Rahman and Abdul Awal Miah.