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Home Ministry report on 'political cases' sent to BNP

By Staff Correspondent
Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim yesterday sent BNP a copy of the Home Ministry report on the merit of alleged political cases against the lawmakers, leaders and workers of the main opposition party.

"I sent (a copy of) the report to BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan by a special messenger after receiving it from the Home Minister," Nasim told The Daily Star late last night.

"We've also told them we'll have nothing to do if the cases concerned charges of murder, use of illegal arms and corruption," he added.

See Page 12 Col 1

Hajj likely on Apr 6

The holy hajj will be observed on April 6, 1998 subject to sighting of moon, reports UNB.

This was informed at an inter-ministerial meeting on hajj management held yesterday at the Religious Ministry with State Minister for Religious Affairs Moulana Nurul Islam in the chair.

The meeting decided that the quota of hajj pilgrims for 1998 might be raised to 45,000, including the government and private management. The quota was fixed at 35,000 when hajj agreement was signed with Saudi government last year.

It was agreed in the meeting that overall hajj expenditure for each hajj pilgrim may come up to Tk 79,255, if Biman agrees to carry the pilgrims at the fare fixed at Tk 36,000 last year.

Fire at oil tank terminal in Ctg kills one

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, Nov 13: A fire broke out at a tank terminal of Padma Oil Company at Gup-takali today leaving one person killed on the spot and injuring five others, police and Fire Brigade sources said.

The dead was identified as Abdul Mannan, an assistant of a tank lorry, while the injured were admitted to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

Three of the injured were in critical condition, hospital sources said.

Fire Brigade sources said the fire originated at about 2 pm today and it was brought under control at around 3:30 pm. Nine

See Page 12 Col 3

Armed gang opens fire on police: 2 hurt, 4 held

By Staff Correspondent
A police official and a member of an armed gang were bullet injured as the gang opened fire during a police raid in the city's Dhalpur area under Demra thana yesterday.

Four people including a woman were arrested from there and a huge quantity of arms and ammunition was recovered from their possession.

Acting on a tip off, Demra police cordoned off a building at Dhalpur at about 11:30 am. The gang opened fire which left a sub-inspector of police and a gang member injured.

The arrested were identified as Raza Mia, 34, Abdul Malek, 27, Saiful, 25 and Marium, 22.

Police recovered four firearms, 51 bullets, three large knives, 122 crackers of different types.

See Page 12 Col 2

The Daily Star
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<http://www.dailystarnews.com>

Inside Today

- Article**
That which is Creative Creates Itself
Column: Do I Dare by A Z M Obaidullah Khan
Page 4
- Focus**
Reducing distance in cost-effective ways
Page 5
- Business**
14 Asian countries draft transit framework deal next week
DSE index rises
Pages 6, 7



The city experienced drizzles yesterday.

— Star photo

Create atmosphere for dialogue : BNP

By Staff Correspondent
Bangladesh Nationalist Party yesterday has accused the ruling Awami League of using parliament just to tarnish its image, creating further impediments to a congenial atmosphere for a dialogue to resolve the current political crisis.

The allegation was made by BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan at a press briefing at the Sangsad Bhaban yesterday evening.

"The Awami League has been using parliament just to tarnish the image of the BNP and its leaders. This would only contribute to further polluting the environment for a dialogue between the ruling party and the opposition to resolve the current political stalemate," he said.

Asked to substantiate the allegation, the BNP leader said that in the name of holding a general discussion in the House on Wednesday, the Treasury

Bench blamed the BNP for loss of lives in Chittagong, while it was the AL goons that had attacked the BNP rally leaving its supporters killed.

"Why should the BNP make any attempt to foil a rally organised by the party itself?" Bhuiyan asked.

The BNP secretary general demanded formation of a judicial committee to probe into the Chittagong incident and exemplary punishment to those responsible for the killing.

Replying to a query, he said BNP was always ready to return to the House. "But what is the use of going back to the House, if we are not allowed to speak about things for which we are voted for?" Bhuiyan posed the question, adding that they did not know under which rules the cabinet members were making statements in parliament every day.

Asked about an official dialogue with the ruling party, Bhuiyan said the government has to create a congenial atmosphere for the talks. "We will consider the environment to be congenial, if the government withdraws all the cases lodged against the BNP leaders and activists, particularly those which were filed since the mayoral order imposing ban on rallies in the city streets. Besides, all false cases filed against the BNP legislators must be withdrawn."

Bhuiyan told the press that his party had recently handed over to Telecommunication Minister Mohammad Nasim a list of 17 MPs against whom 'false charges' have been filed by the government. "The number would increase as the government is increasingly filing cases against our MPs."

See Page 12 Col 4

AL leaders blame BNP for creating 'anarchy' for creating 'anarchy'

Hundreds of Awami League activists came out on the street here yesterday protesting the "opposition violence" in Chittagong and "conspiracy" against the peace process in Chittagong Hill Tracts, reports UNB.

They paraded the city streets after holding a brief rally, where the ruling party leaders blasted the 'deliberate anarchy unleashed by BNP along with the anti-liberation forces.'

Three ministers — Zillur Rahman, Sajeda Chowdhury and Abu Sayeed — addressed the rally at Paltan Maidan with the city mayor and city AL president Mohammad Hanif in the chair.

Organised by the city Awami League, the rally was also addressed by Mozaffar Hossain Paltu, Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya MP and Nurul Fazal Bulbul.

Criticising the main opposition, the AL general secretary and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman said

Begum Khaleda Zia and her party do not want peace in the country.

"They are out to create confusion about the peace process in Chittagong Hill Tracts," he said describing the planned peace agreement a great success of the Sheikh Hasina's government.

Referring to the previous BNP government, the deputy leader in parliament also said they had gone to India to hold talks with the Shantibahini, but were unable to achieve any success.

He blamed BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia and her party activists for 'letting loose a reign of terror' in the port city after her meeting on Tuesday.

"Her (Begum Zia's) party members launched attacks on the law enforcers," the LGRD minister said, alleging that every place visited by Begum Zia witnessed a violence. In this regard, he mentioned Begum Zia's

See Page 12 Col 3

I'll quit JS, give up politics, if govt can prove it

By Staff Correspondent
Salaudun Quader Chowdhury, a legislator belonging to Bangladesh Nationalist Party, yesterday said he would give up politics, if the government could prove its claim that he had instructed the party activists to resist police during incident in Chittagong that left five persons killed.

Chowdhury made the statement yesterday evening, when his attention was drawn by newsmen that AL legislators asked him to make an announcement over microphone to resist police at the flag end of the rally concerned.

He further said, "I will not only resign from the Jatiya Sangsad, I will rather give up politics, if the government can prove the allegation that I instructed the BNP activists to what they called resist the members of the police that day."

Chowdhury hoped that the

See Page 12 Col 8

Thana gheraoed Police SI beat one to death in Jessore

From Our Correspondent
JESSORE, Nov 13: Thousands of people gheraoed the Keshabpur police station today to protest alleged murder of an old man by thana police at Shahpur under Trimohini Union last night.

Local people said a group of policemen led by SI Hafizur Rahman raided the house of Kalam Gazi (80) around midnight and arrested his son Hamidul Islam.

When Kalam Gazi asked the police to show warrant of arrest, police allegedly refused to give any reply to his question. SI Hafizur Rahman got furious and began to kick him mercilessly leaving him in a pool of blood. Hafizur Rahman then left the place with policemen, witnesses said.

Hearing this, a large number of people gathered around Kalam's house and took him to the local health complex. But Kalam Gazi died on the way. Later, people from different

See Page 12 Col 7

Tk 2000cr plan to boost rural economy may be launched next month

By Inam Ahmed
A plan to revitalise the rural economy, injecting about Tk 2,000 crore, is likely to be initiated from next month, according to highly-placed sources in the finance ministry.

The plan will have two broad components — the traditional agricultural credit and a new non-crop sector credit — with the ultimate aim to increase income of the rural poor.

The central bank has already sanctioned Tk 1,000 crore from its re-discount window for non-crop income generation projects for the rural poor to be disbursed through the Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB) and the Rajshahi Krishi Unnyan Bank (RKUB).

According to the sources, the plan has been taken at the initiative of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The first meeting on it was held Wednesday at the International Conference Centre in the city.

BKB and RKUB, which were once plagued with high rate of non-performing loans, will get the money at bank rate and will be required to achieve a loan recovery rate of at least 95 per cent.

These two development financial institutions will act upon the model of the micro-credit programme of the NGOs and will give money to the poor without any collateral. The micro projects will stand as guarantee for the credit, the sources said.

The revamping plan will also address the vital problem of bureaucratic loan sanctioning process.

"We have taken steps to simplify the loan sanctioning process so that the illiterate can have access to the banks," said a source. "One of the reasons why banks cannot reach the real poor is the amount of paper works and complicated system which also creates scope for middlemen to step in. We will cut them out of the new scheme."

Meanwhile, another about Tk 1,000 crore will be given for the traditional agriculture credit programme.

"Last year, we gave about Tk 750 crore. This year it will be increased to Tk 1,000 crore in line with the government's policy to support agricultural growth," said the source.

JS consensus must for ombudsman: Khasru

By Staff Correspondent
Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Abdul Matin Khasru has urged all political parties represented in the Jatiya Sangsad to reach a consensus on the question of appointing an ombudsman.

"The government is ready to appoint a person, acceptable to all, as ombudsman... But there must be a consensus in the House on the issue. If there is a consensus today, we can appoint an ombudsman tomorrow," the minister told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

Objecting to the tabling of a private member's bill by Rabeya Bhuiyan of Jatiya Party, seeking an amendment to the ombudsman Act of 1980, the Law Minister termed the bill faulty and needless since the present government was very much for appointment of an ombudsman.

The bill proposed to specify July 1, 1998 as the date for appointment of an ombudsman. Stressing the need for appointing an ombudsman on an urgent basis, it further said due to the 'successive governments' wasting of long 17 years" since the law was enacted, frustration and lack of public confidence in parliament and the government had taken place.

Underlining the importance of the post of ombudsman, the Law Minister said "The post is non-political and universal."

"As soon as we reach a consensus in the House we'll appoint an ombudsman. If we do the job unilaterally, the appointment might be opposed by any of the parties," the minister said, urging the JP lawmakers to withdraw her bill.

For the lack of consensus on national issues like this, he blamed the major opposition party BNP which, he said, had started the practice of remaining absent from the House from the very first day of the present parliament's functioning.

The law minister also criticised BNP and JP for not implementing during their rule the constitutional provision of appointing an ombudsman.

Speaking in support of her bill, Rabeya Bhuiyan requested

See Page 12 Col 4

Bangabandhu Murder Case Farook told me that they were going to topple govt: PW-40

The 40th prosecution witness in the Bangabandhu Murder Case told the court yesterday that Major Syed Farooq Rahman, before leaving the cantonment for the August 15 operation, said they were 'going to topple the government,' reports UNB.

According to witness Hon Lt (dismissed) Syed Ahmed, Major Farook said this to him in the early hours of August 15 when he wanted to know their destination.

The witness said he also asked Major Farook whether General Shafiqullah was informed of the matter. In reply, Farook said, "I don't find it necessary," the witness added.

Making his deposition, Syed Ahmed said as per schedule he fell in for night parade at around 8:30 pm on August 14.

After the fall-in, he said, he handed over the parade to Major Mohiuddin of Lancer, who handed it over to Acting Commander of 1st Bengal Lancer Major Syed Farooq Rahman.

After that, he said, he was granted leave by Major Farook due to his sickness and left for his quarters, about 200 yards from his house. And the night parade began, he said.

He said at about 2 to 2:30 am, a runner (soldier) came to him and said RDM (regimental dadar major) asked him (witness) to go to the JCO mess.

Syed Ahmed said he sent back the soldier and asked him to send the RDM to him. After 10 to 15 minutes, the RDM came and told him that Artillery unit had come and lancer soldiers were cleaning the tanks for a combined training of lancer and artillery, he said.

The witness said the RDM further told him that they want arms and ammunition. "I wanted to know whether he has any permission from Quarter Master Captain Delwar Hossain and asked him (RDM) to bring the quarter master JCO and the guard commander," he said.

After 10 to 15 minutes, he said, quarter master JCO and the guard commander came to him and showed a slip of Captain Delwar. "I then gave him the key of armoury and asked him to keep the slip in the treasury."

"After about half an hour, it struck my mind that there was money in the treasury and I rushed to the quarter guard."

At the quarter guard, he learnt from guard commander

See Page 12 Col 5



Participants in The Daily Star Roundtable on 'Potential of the Three-Nation Business Summit' at its office yesterday.

Ismail Hossain to be made Acting IGP

By Staff Correspondent
Inspector General of Police Azizul Haq is due to go on 'earned leave' from Sunday, a month before his scheduled retirement.

A Home Ministry order was issued to this effect yesterday.

Additional IG Ismail Hossain will be the Acting IGP.

The ministry also transferred Dhaka Metropolitan Commissioner Al Mamun as the Additional IG at police headquarters. Mamun is due to retire on November 20.

Additional IG of CID Mahmud Al Farid was made DMP Commissioner while IG Nurul Huda has been transferred to the CID.

Ctg violence Case against 19 starts, 15 sent to jail

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, Nov 13: Police started a case with Kotwali thana in connection with Tuesday's violence, accusing 19 people including BNP leaders Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, MP, Giasuddin Quader Chowdhury, MP, JP leader Kazi Jafar Ahmed and JAGPA chief Shafiqul Alam Pradhan.

The 15 people who were arrested during the violence were sent to jail.

The violence which left five persons including a policeman dead, erupted while BNP chairperson Begum Zia was at the flag end of her speech in a grand rally at the Outer Stadium.

Police and BNP activists were locked in clashes for hours together on that day.

JCD, BCL observe strike at BUET

By BUET Correspondent
No classes were held at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology yesterday due to a strike called by both the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD).

The strike was called after activists of the two organisations had an altercation. The JCD activists reportedly attacked and ransacked the room of Mainul Hassan, the GS of Ahsanullah Hall, Chhatra Sangsad, on Wednesday. Later that day, while the JCD workers were holding an interval meeting in the guest room of Titumir Hall, the BCL activists ransacked the place and clashed with the rival activists. Both

See Page 12 Col 3

Bangabandhu murder PW-39 kept in police custody for over 2 hrs

Risaldar Mansur Ahmed, a prosecution witness in Bangabandhu Murder Case, was kept under the police custody for over two hours yesterday for his conduct in the trial court, reports BSS.

The PW-39 was kept in the police custody on a verbal order of the court.

The incident took place during the cross-examination of the witness by the defence lawyer of accused Lieutenant Colonel (dismissed) Syed Farooq Rahman.

Before ordering Risaldar Mansur to be put under custody, the District and Sessions Judge, Dhaka, Kazi Golam Rasul repeatedly cautioned him against speaking too much and asked him to confine himself only to the answers he is asked for and nothing more.

Mansur remained under the police custody till the rising of court.

When the court rose for the day, AC (prosecution) Mahabubur Rahman told BSS that the court vacated the order and the witness has been set free.

Keep shops closed after dusk to reduce power consumption: DCC

Dhaka City Corporation has requested the city's shop owners and the management of business establishments to exercise austerity measures and reduce electricity consumption, reports UNB.

The DCC has asked the shop owners, except those of food and medicine and kutchra bazars, to keep their shutters down after the maghrib prayer everyday from November 20, said a press release yesterday.

The city corporation has also decided that the street lights of one side of the roads will remain off from the same day as a temporary measure to reduce power consumption during the peak hours.

The DCC has also requested the city dwellers to keep their lights, fans and aircoolers off when they don't need it, and refrain from all sorts of illuminations, excepting the state functions, the release added.