

AL leaders blast current activities of opposition

Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed yesterday expressed gratitude to Almighty Allah for his blessings to complete the trial of the killing of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, his family members and close relatives, reports BSS.

Participating in the hour and a half of unscheduled discussion in the Jatiya Sangsad, Tofail described the court verdict, giving capital punishment to the 15 accused, as historic.

The minister also extended his sincere thanks to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her relentless efforts to overcome all hurdles including repealing the infamous Indemnity Ordinance from holding the trial of this heinous killing in history of the country.

The verdict of the Bangabandhu Murder Case, once again proved that the rule of law has been established in the country under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Tofail said adding, the whole nation is now grateful.

Tofail recalled those who had sacrificed their lives demanding the trial of the killing of the Bangabandhu and paid tributes to their memories.

Tofail, however, referred to the destructive and anarchic activities as resorted to by the main opposition BNP over the last few days, and expressed his grave concern at killing of innocent people and destruction

of public properties.

He pointed out that it was BNP which had created disturbances in their own meeting at Paltan Maidan on November 7 and killed Jubo League leader Oltur Rahman. Later, the BNP called a two-day hartal and on its first day, killed innocent people again.

Tofail urged the people to resist the BNP conspiracies and designs unconditionally.

Earlier, Abdul Latif Mirza (AL-Sirajganj) told the House that some of the killers of Bangabandhu from Libya sent Taka 60 crore to some BNP and Chhatra Dal leaders for resorting to destructive and anarchic activities in the country in a bid to foil the trial of the killing.

Referring to the recent statements of the leader of the opposition Begum Khaleda Zia, Mirza Latif said she (Khaleda) wanted to protect the killers of Bangabandhu.

He expressed his concern over the disturbances created by BNP and destruction of vehicles and public properties, and killing of Awami League and Jubo League leaders and workers throughout the country and wanted to know how long such destructive and anarchic activities would continue.

Speaking next, A B M Abul Queshem (AL-Chittagong) described BNP as a party of terrorists and urged its leaders to shun their politics of destruction.

Nasim tells JS

Verdict has freed nation from longtime curse

Mohammad Nasim, Minister for Works and Telecommunications, yesterday said the verdict of the Bangabandhu Murder Case has made the nation proud as it has freed us from a longtime curse, reports BSS.

"For long we had to bear the burden of bringing to book the killers of Bangabandhu and many others on August 15, 1975. But now we can feel relieved," he told the Jatiya Sangsad.

In an emotion-choked voice, Nasim said the conspirators had also killed four national leaders, who were close and longtime associates of Bangabandhu, under captivity in their prison cells and added that those killers would be brought to book by the grace of Allah.

He said it is unfortunate that when the entire nation is expressing gratitude to Almighty Allah for correcting what remained incorrect for so long, one particular party has called hartal in the country clearly in support of the killers. "This hartal is against whom?" he asked, adding that people from

all walks of life contributed to the trial of the killers of Bangabandhu.

Referring to a comment made by BNP leader Nazmul Huda in an interview that he (Huda) favours trial of all killings but this trial was delayed, the minister asked who was responsible for the delay? He said Ziaur Rahman was in power for six years, Ershad for nine years and Khaleda Zia for five years but none took steps for holding this trial.

Nasim said the government of Sheikh Hasina would try the conspirators of all political killings including that of Ziaur Rahman and added that it is strange that Khaleda Zia during her tenure did not investigate into the killing of her own husband.

The minister said this government successfully resolved the Ganges Water issue, Chittagong Hill Tracts problem and to devastating floods. "We will succeed in accomplishing other successes," he said adding that the verdict of the Bangabandhu Murder Case would also be carried out in due course.



TANTI BAZAR: As early as eight in the morning, blasts and teargas smoke became the order in the area. Angry activists hurled crackers at a police jeep nearby. Two were reported hurt in the incident. — Star photo



BANGSHAL: Firemen try to bring a blaze under control at the local BNP office. — Star photo



SHAHJAHANPUR: Police haul Roni into a van. His family said he was picked up from the terrace of his house where he was walking with his toddler nephew. The policemen allegedly hurled abuse at his sister before returning the baby to her. — Star photo by Amran Hossain



NAYA BAZAR: A teargas shell exploded inside a riot police van during the hartal yesterday. — Star photo

People of 7 unions of Dhubaura thana of Mymensingh allege They have heard about VGF cards but yet to get any

MYMENSINGH, Nov 9: Irregularities have been reported in the distribution of Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) cards from seven unions of Dhubaura thana of the district, reports UNB.

A number of destitute people of Dompata village in Bughber union said they did not get any relief material since the beginning of the flood.

They said they have heard about VGF card, but yet to receive any even after approaching UP Members and the Chairman several times.

They also alleged that members and Chairman distributed the cards among their relatives and well-to-do families depriving the poor and destitute families.

Two cards were issued against a single name, they said adding that others are being deprived. Two such lucky card holders are Abirjan, wife of Hasen Ali of Daripara village and Jahura Khatun, wife of Bashiruddin of Gamaritola union.

The cards of Abirjan bears the numbers 194 and 292 while those of Jahura are 185 and 886.

Besides, said the villagers, two cards were given to the members of a same family depriving others. Mannan and his wife Rezia Khatun of Daripara village received two cards bearing numbers 260 and 189.

Besides, many card holders said they received 14 kg of rice and wheat instead of stipulated 16 kg.

In Purakandulia union, people alleged that UP Chairman indulged in massive irregularities in the distribution of cards depriving the needy and destitute families.

He distributed 400 cards among 300 families in his own village and the rest 600 cards have been distributed in the rest 27 villages, they said.

District officials here said there are some allegations against the UP Chairmen and other people involved in the programme and investigations are going on in this regard.

A number of cases were also lodged against some of them following the completion of the investigation, they added.

Israel to delay West Bank pullout despite US pressure

JERUSALEM, Nov 9: Despite new US demands that Israel stick to the timetable of the Wye peace agreement, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Monday he will not move forward until the Palestinians do more to combat Islamic militants, reports AP.

Netanyahu's senior adviser, David Bar-Ilan, said Israel will probably not begin its phased troop withdrawal from 13 per cent of the West Bank on Nov. 16 as stipulated by the land-for-security accord with the Palestinians.

"There will be a few days' delay, I presume," Bar-Ilan said. "Israel appears to be at odds with the United States on three key issues of the peace accord — the time table, continued Jewish settlement expansion and the procedure for revoking provisions in the PLO founding charter calling for Israel's destruction."

In a phone call last week, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told Netanyahu that she expected Israel to implement the agreement on time, said US Embassy spokesman Larry Schwartz.

"Our understanding is that the Wye timetable will not slip," Schwartz told The Associated Press. "The timetable is meant to continue as it was signed."

Palestinian negotiator Hassan Asfour said the agreement is "as good as dead" if Israel refuses to carry out the with-

drawals on time. "He cannot expect to have implementation of one part of the agreement, our commitments, and postpone the other part," he said.

Concerning the PLO charter, Albright sided with the Palestinians who say the clauses need to be changed by acclamation, but not by a vote, the Maariv daily said.

A vote by acclamation is when people in a group applaud, stomp their feet or show another sign of support, rather than by its members raising their hands to be counted.

Netanyahu said Monday he insisted on a vote. "I think the most important thing is that both sides fulfill their obligations stipulated in the agreement," Netanyahu said. "We are prepared to fulfill our side when the Palestinians combat terrorism and when they bring the charter for a vote."

Albright also took Netanyahu to task for continued settlement expansion. Marris said, "We cannot make progress this way," the newspaper quoted Albright as telling Netanyahu. "It is impossible to view them as anything but a provocation."

Since the Oct. 23 signing of the accord, settlers have set up mobile homes on five West Bank hills in what one hard-line politician described as a last-minute land grab.

"What won't be ours, will be theirs," Benny Elon, a member of the ultranationalist Moledet

Party, told the Haaretz newspaper. "It's simple. We have to grab the land."

Netanyahu aides have also said that construction in the Jewish neighbourhood of Har Homa in traditionally Arab east Jerusalem would begin soon.

Netanyahu has said the Israeli Cabinet has to ratify the agreement before Israel can begin fulfilling its commitments.

In the past two weeks, cabinet debate was postponed or broken off four times by Netanyahu who said he needed more clarifications from the Palestinians.

Last Friday, ministers dispersed in response to a suicide bombing by the Islamic Jihad group in Jerusalem in which two assailants were killed and 21 Israelis injured.

Bar-Ilan said he expected the cabinet to reconvene later this week, though a date has been set. Israel's parliament was to debate the accord Tuesday and Wednesday, but is postponing the session until the cabinet has voted on the agreement.

An Israeli opposition legislator, Haim Ramon, said Netanyahu apparently was trying to hold off on a cabinet vote until after a key coalition partner, the National Religious Party, decides in a convention early next week whether to stay in the government.

PA to declare statehood next year

CAIRO, Nov 9: A senior Palestinian official said Monday that the Palestinian Authority will declare statehood next year despite Israeli objections, reports AP.

"There is no backing off on our commitment to declare independence on May 4, 1999," Nabil Shaath, Palestinian minister of planning and international cooperation, was quoted as saying by Egypt's Middle East News Agency.

"Whether we reach an agreement with the Israelis on May 4 or not... the Palestinian state will be declared," Shaath said.

May 4, 1999 is the day when the two sides must conclude a final land agreement under the 1993 Oslo peace accord between Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and then Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Shaath's remarks contradict an understanding that Rabin's successor, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, reached last month in Wye Plantation with Arafat not to declare an independent Palestinian state before the two sides agree on a final peace formula.

Indian, US experts start talks on N-technology

NEW DELHI, Nov 9: Indian and US experts started two days of talks here today, focusing on nuclear technology transfers following India's nuclear tests in May, reports AFP.

Indian and US officials said the talks got under way at Hyderabad House in the heart of the city but gave no details. Journalists were barred from the meeting.

The US team was headed by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State John Barker.

The discussions came just after US President Bill Clinton lifted some of the sanctions imposed against India and Pakistan because of their rival nuclear tests six months ago. The US delegation is to leave for Pakistan tomorrow.

India and the United States have been holding closed-door negotiations since May, with Washington exerting heavy pressure on New Delhi to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has promised to sign

the CTBT before next September.

Jaswant Singh, an Indian government special envoy, is to hold a sixth meeting with US Deputy Secretary of State Stroble Talbot later this month.

According to Indian press reports, the United States had expressed willingness to discuss possible nuclear technology transfers to India, which is currently excluded by the non-proliferation regime.

A senior US official in Washington said Clinton had decided to lift selected sanctions because of "concrete steps" taken by New Delhi and Islamabad "to address our non-proliferation concern."

But on Sunday, prime minister Vajpayee said the sanctions that had been lifted displayed a bias in Pakistan's favour.

"We are against such discrimination... of lifting sanctions against Pakistan on the ground that its economy has been shattered," he said.

Gunbattle between troops, militants leaves 4 dead in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, Nov 9: Security forces battled for five hours with separatist militants holed up in a residential area in the capital of disputed Kashmir Monday and shot dead four of them, police said, reports AP.

In a separate incident late Sunday, Indian troops and separatists fought near the town of Kupwara. Five militants and one soldier were killed.

Police and witnesses said a unit of 10 militants ambushed an Indian patrol in Srinagar Sunday night with hand grenades, then disappeared into the Hyderabad enclave. Four of them hid in newly constructed vacant houses, witnesses and police said.

Soldiers cordoned off the area and ordered the militants to surrender, police said. They then opened fire at the militants, who responded with gunfire. Four militants were killed and three soldiers were injured. Senior police officials were at the scene commanding the operation.

Canadian PM cancels talks with Mahathir

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 9: Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien has cancelled planned talks with his Malaysian counterpart Mahathir Mohamad here amid concern over the trial of ousted deputy premier Anwar Ibrahim, Canadian officials said today, reports AFP.

"I can confirm that there will be no bilateral meeting of the two prime ministers, but they will be sitting beside each other at the normal meetings and will have other opportunities to talk," Canadian High Commissioner Andre Simard told AFP.

Chretien "felt that the prevailing situation was not conducive to such a meeting," he said.

Canada has been among foreign missions which have sent representatives daily to observe Anwar's corruption trial, which began its second week today.

The announcement will be a further blow to Mahathir, after US President Bill Clinton said he would not hold the usual bilateral talks between the United States and the host nation of the annual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum.

Chretien is due to arrive next week to take part in the 18-member APEC summit from November 17-18.

Political crisis in Cambodia Ruling party must make concessions to end deadlock: Opposition

PHNOM PENH, Nov 9: Cambodia's main opposition said today that Premier Hun Sen's ruling party must make concessions if the deadlock over a new government is to be resolved, reports Reuters.

Deposed co-premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh's FUNCINPEC party said it was ready to take part in talks to end the political crisis but all parties had to give ground in the national interest, as FUNCINPEC had done after winning a 1993 election.

"FUNCINPEC is ready to participate in solving the deadlock. But this can only be done if all political parties accept to make concessions," the party said in a statement.

The opposition, led by Ranariddh, has rejected the victory of Hun Sen's Cambodian Peoples' Party (CPP) in a July 26

election, saying the CPP used fraud and intimidation to win.

Though it won the most seats, Hun Sen's party did not win enough to form a government on its own and opposition leaders have refused his offers to form a coalition.

Ranariddh's party did not list any specific concessions in today's statement.

Last week it published a list of issues it wanted dealt with before a coalition is formed, including amnesties for several key opposition supporters accused of security crimes, human rights violations and political and economic reforms.

FUNCINPEC is also seeking the influential position of national assembly president, or speaker, a post it gave to Hun Sen's party after FUNCINPEC won a 1993 election.

Police arrest members of pro-India party in Nepal

KATHMANDU, Nov 9: Nepal police today arrested members of the pro-India Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP) to prevent them from burning a copy of the constitution in protest against alleged discrimination in the kingdom, witnesses said, reports AFP.

NSP president Gajendra Narayan Singh, central committee member Rameshwar Raya Yadav and 18 party workers, including three women, were arrested.

The NSP has demanded amendments to the 1990 Constitution of Nepal, which it says is discriminatory and still contains the remnants of the overthrown partyless Panchayat system.

The 30-year-old Panchayat system was overthrown by a joint movement initiated by Communist and Congress parties in 1990 and was replaced by a democratic multi-party system.

The same year, a new constitution was promulgated by the king which transferred sovereignty to the monarch. The king agreed to become a constitutional monarch.

Many hailed the new constitution as a democratic "role model." It was prepared after consulting the constitutions of the US, France, India and other democratic nations.

But the NSP chose today, the 9th Constitution Day to burn a copy of the document as a protest against alleged discrimination against the Terai people who live in the low-land tropical region.

US Energy Secy arrives in Taiwan for trade talks

TAIPEI, Nov 9: US Energy Secretary Bill Richardson arrived Monday for trade talks in a rare visit to Taiwan by an American Cabinet official that has already raised protests from China, reports AP.

"I'm looking forward to opportunities to reaffirm and strengthen the longstanding friendship between Americans and the people of Taiwan," Richardson said in an arrival statement.

His visit is considered an attempt by Washington to ease Taiwanese feelings of insecurity following statement by President Bill Clinton this summer that badly rattled Taiwan.

Richardson was to meet Taiwanese officials before addressing an annual joint US-Taiwan business conference Tuesday. He is also expected to meet with Taiwan President Lee Teng-Hui before leaving Wednesday.

Richardson said his presence at the business conference "reflects the strength of economic and commercial relations between the US and Taiwan."

Participants will hold workshop discussions on exchanges in fields including telecommunications, infrastructure, venture capital and biotechnology.

Clinton's strong reiteration that Washington would not back Taiwan's attempts to assert itself internationally was seen here as a concession to China that would encourage Beijing to isolate the island it considers a renegade province.

Taiwanese officials have called for reassurances that Washington's support remains

South Korea for better ties with China

SEOUL, Nov 9: South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung said today that his nation would like to establish a comprehensive and cooperative partnership with China, reports Xinhua.

The relations between the two countries, especially in the economic respect have sustained rapid development since the two set up full diplomatic links in 1992. Kim said in an exclusive interview with Chinese reporters before his five-day state visit to China starting from tomorrow.

South Korea's trade volume with China — its third largest trade partner, has tripled since 1992. Last year the volume was 23.7 billion US dollars.

Meanwhile, Kim stressed that there is much room for further development with regard to the comprehensive partnership.

On the Taiwan issue, Kim said South Korea's consistent policy is that there is only one China in the world, namely the People's Republic of China, and Taiwan is a province of China.

The South Korean President said that while staying in China, he will discuss various bilateral, international and regional issues with Chinese leaders, with emphasis on co-

operative ways to maintain peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, to strengthen cultural exchange and to realise peace and prosperity in the northeast Asian region.

Talking about the economic situation of South Korea, Kim said his country has overcome the crisis of foreign exchange currency, with its foreign exchange reserves rising to 45 billion dollars last month from the 3.8 billion dollars in February of this year. He predicted that South Korea's economic growth will turn positive from negative late next year and the country will recover rapid development from the year 2000 onwards.

More donation for flood victims

The Disaster Relief Fund Advisory Committee of Hong Kong has donated Hong Kong dollar 1.5 million for the flood victims of Bangladesh, reports UNB.

Bangladesh community and other philanthropic organisations in Dubai, UAE, also donated T-shirts and blankets worth about Tk 7.65 lakh for flood victims.

Flood Relief Coordination Cell of the Foreign Ministry yesterday received donations.