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Unite to resist them: PM
'Vested quarters out to destabilise society'

JESSORE, Mar 10: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today categorically said that persons involved in the Jessore bomb blasts would be dealt with iron hand, reports BSS.

The government will find out the culprits and take stern actions against them," she said while addressing a public meeting at the Jessore Eidgah Maidan this afternoon.

Hasina, who flew in here this morning from the capital to see the people who have been injured in the blasts and express sympathy to the bereaved families, said "I will always remain with you in your sorrows and griefs."

The prime minister asked the people to unite to launch social movement against the terrorists and anti-social elements so that they were eliminated from society. "You can face any challenge if you are united," she said, adding "never lose your courage and confidence. Face everything boldly."

Referring to the activities of the opposition parties, she advised them not to play with the lives of innocent people. She said a vested quarter, which does not believe in democracy and does not have faith in the democratic norms and parliamentary system of administration, is out to destroy the peace and stability in the country.

Referring to recent killings in the country including those of JSD leader Kazi Aref Ahmed and the editor of Runner newspaper, she said the vested quarter wanted to terrorise the society and destabilise it for political reasons.

The PM said heinous crimes like killings of artists at the cultural function might cause fear in the minds of the people. However, she assured the people that her government would always stand by them and take all steps to nab the culprits.

She announced that each

Opposition

From Page 1

Minto Road in the city. Jamaat-e-Islami and Islamic Oikya Jote will stage demonstration, hold rallies and bring out procession in district and thana headquarters on the day.

The meeting in one of its resolutions on Jessore killings said the government after being failed to control the law and order situation is trying to divert the attention of the people by shifting the blame on the Opposition.

It condemned and protested the government's "evil" effort to blame the opposition and demanded proper investigation into the incident and arrest of the real culprits.

The meeting asked the government to refrain from such "evil" politics in the interest of the country and democracy.

Sources at the meeting said that the representatives of the four parties continued their discussion on future course of action and strategy of the movement.

They said discussion is also going on at party level and the liaison committee will hold a series of meetings in the next few days to finalise programmes which will be announced in phases.

A leader of the committee said the parties are discussing plans to hold grand public meetings in divisional headquarters in the current month.

He said there is a possibility of calling a hartal after the SSC examination this month protesting 'deterioration of law and order, frequent killing, and massacres in Jessore and Kushtia.

Donors

From Page 1

on even-handedness and tolerance. Political differences should be resolved peacefully in forums like Parliament, not through hartals and violent confrontation. At the same time, the government must ensure the neutrality of state power and fair access by those involved in the political process to media, including the electronic media.

"Bangladesh's development partners have a stake in the country's social and economic development. As we have made clear on previous occasions, we are gravely concerned by the damage done to the nation by political intolerance, violence and intimidation.

"We join with many Bangladeshi community leaders from all sectors in calling on the leaders of all political parties to work together for the future of the country and its people.

"We, therefore, repeat our call for enlightened leadership that serves the nation as a whole and that will ensure good governance, and a stable social and economic environment in which Bangladesh can grow and prosper."

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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Members of the Sammilita Sangskritik Jote observed a mass hunger strike at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday protesting killing of JSD leader Kazi Aref Ahmed in Kushtia and eight people at a Udichi function at Jessore. — Star photo

PM: Take stern action

From Page 1

footing and realised that they could never return to the democratic, are conspiring to further their designs. After the sad incident in Jessore, we noticed that the Opposition remained silent, not raising a storm in parliament," she said.

Expressing her surprise at the Opposition's "silence," she said that if she would be in Opposition, she would have definitely raised it in parliament and created a furor. "We even prepared a statement to reply to the Opposition, if they raised it," she said.

"It came as a big surprise. Even on the next day, when we wanted to move a condolence resolution and were condoling the death of a parliament employee, they opposed the move," the Prime Minister said adding, "This was not desirable."

Ministers Abdur Razzak and Begum Motia Chowdhury, State Minister for Energy Rafiqul Islam and Awami League President member Amir Hossain Amu were present beside the premier.

"We must build up a social resistance against them. We must start it involving everyone. Besides the law enforcing agencies, you all must come forward to stand up against them," she told the political leaders. Local leaders of JSD, NAP (M), Ganoforum, Workers party, Udichi, business community and the Bar attended the meeting.

Sheikh Hasina said, police often feel frustrated as the criminals get bail. She cited one incident in which an accused in a murder case obtained a court order so that police do not "harass" him for three weeks.

She also reminded journalists to maintain caution so that terrorists are not empowered against combing operations in the southwestern districts.

Earlier Home Secretary Shafiqur Rahman gave an account of law and order and said that police was probing Sunday's incident. They would make a breakthrough soon, he said giving details. He also defended the SP of Jessore who came under heavy fire from Udichi leaders for "not being polite" to them and not providing enough security for the concert.

The SP is an honest and efficient person, the Home Secretary said.

Rabiul Alam, district JSD leader and former deputy commander of Jessore Mujib Bahini during the Liberation War said, during his 32 years' political career he did not face such a situation as it is now. "Fear is gripping us all," he said

urging the Prime Minister to take stern action against terrorists.

Iqbal Kabir Zahid, a Workers Party leader, said the bombings at Udichi function is part of a big conspiracy. Those who have done it must be dealt with sternly.

Echoing Rabiul Alam he also alleged, "Terrorists have well connections with the ruling party. The thanas were previously under BNP control. Now they have gone to Awami League."

NAP(M) leader Advocate Enamul Huq said, during his long political career he never felt afraid to speak or move around. "But today I am scared. Such a situation is not desirable under Awami League government."

Advocate Abul Hossain of CPB noted that during day time, there is safety in towns. But the villagers are not at all secured. In thanas there are civilian 'cashiers' who collect money from criminals and smugglers who move freely.

At this stage the Prime Minister wanted to know who are the so-called cashiers. Hossain explained, "They are police-employed 'collectors' who are visible in every thana."

Kamruzzaman Chunnun, the newly elected Chairman of Jessore Municipality, said the situation was such that he was urged by his neighbours not to go out of home after Sunday's bomb explosions.

Advocate Kazi Abdus Shahid Lal, a Udichi leader alleged that some sections in the administrations in Brahmanbaria, Barisal and Faridpur were encouraging religious fanaticism, couraging religious fanaticism.

District Bar Association President Farazi Shahadat Hossain alleged that criminals were often seen moving with police. Even people are scared to come up with evidence as a result, he said.

A noted journalist, Shamsur Rahman, told the Prime Minister of a 'death sentence' passed against him by terrorists for writing against them.

JCD leader Pinto released

By DU Correspondent
Nasiruddin Ahmed Pinto, general secretary of the Jatityatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), the student wing of opposition BNP, was released yesterday from Dhaka Central Jail.

Pinto was arrested from the city's Lalbag area on December 30.

A new lease of life

From Page 1

able to start a new life". Asma said, her mother sitting beside. Equally delighted to see her daughter recover, Asma's mother Zahura Begum said, "I am so happy to see my daughter move, eat and talk the way she did earlier. It's a miracle. I thank God for this."

But Zahura regretted that the doctors who crippled her daughter and killed her unborn child went unpunished. "The 'mistake' they claim to have committed is just an excuse."

Asma Begum, a garment worker from Magura, had gone to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for an ovarian tumour operation. But her hopes for a normal life had disappeared seven months ago when gynecologists erroneously removed her only functioning kidney.

That was on August 11, 1998. During the operation, Asma's five-month-old pregnancy was also terminated.

When all these came to light and the doctors tried a cover-up, a media focus on this hapless girl led to an official enquiry and her quick transfer to the BMUH on September 7, 1998 for better treatment.

But sadly, due to alleged inept handling of her case and poor attention, her condition deteriorated, putting her life at great risk. Asma waited for more than five months for a kidney transplantation.

During the painful five months, she survived on haemodialysis - a costly device used to excrete toxic fluid from body.

In a five-hour major operation at the BMUH on February 2, Asma's mother gave one of her kidneys so that her daughter could live.

The transplanted kidney has since been functioning well. But she will have to make regular visits to hospital for check-up. "To keep the implanted tissue (kidney) match in her body for the rest of her life, she has to continue taking drugs," Prof. Harun-ur-Rashid head of the kidney department at the BMUH said.

Since the kidney transplantation, Asma has gained weight and her appetite has returned to normal. The persisting abdominal pain has gone.

The government had formed two separate probe bodies to investigate the matter. But neither of the reports have been made public.

Following a flurry of press reports, a human rights group, Odhikar had filed a writ petition on behalf of Asma seeking prosecution of the doctors responsible and compensation. The accused in the writ are the health secretary, principal of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Prof. Mahmuda Khatun, Dr. Golam Mostafa and Dr. Fatema who performed the operation.

Int'l confce ends in city
'Adopt biosafety regulations without delay'

By Staff Correspondent

Speakers at an international conference in the city yesterday stressed the urgency of adopting biosafety regulations for the country.

Such regulations are needed especially when Bangladesh is graduating to a new level of scientific advancement both in terms of laboratory research and commercial use of genetically engineered seeds. In short, biosafety means policies and procedures that guarantee environmentally safe applications of biotechnology, panelists said.

The views were aired on the concluding day of a three-day International Plant Tissue Culture Conference on 'Status of Biosafety Regulations in Bangladesh' at Botany Department auditorium of Dhaka University.

Bangladesh Association for Plant Tissue Culture (BAPTC) organised the conference that drew a good number of experts, scientists and students from home and abroad.

With The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam in the chair, the session on biosafety was addressed by Prof. Syed Hadiuzzaman of Botany Department, DU. Dr. Yusuf Zafar of National Institute for Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering (NIBGE), Pakistan, and Dr. AM. Abed Chowdhury of CSIRO Plant Industry, Australia, Prof. Zeba Islam Seraj of Biochemistry Department, DU, acted as co-chairman of the session.

Giving a brief preview of a draft biosafety guideline which is now under government scrutiny, Prof. Hadiuzzaman said Bangladesh should have protective measures so that people are not exposed to future biohazards. Generally, biohazard means potential danger posed by a living or biologically derived material.

Mahfuz Anam said the draft regulation should be brought into public domain and it should be adopted as a government policy.

The Daily Star editor spoke

of low-profile status of science and technology ministry. Responding to an idea that a biotechnology cell should be set up in the ministry, Anam said, "Let's empower the ministry first, then comes the issue of setting up a cell."

Indicating to the tremendous transformation in the area of biotechnology, Anam said, "There is no choice - we have to know, we have to learn." He expressed concern at the mindset of the politicians and policy planners who have failed to prioritise real issues and rather indulged in rhetoric.

Dr. Abed Chowdhury emphasised maintaining bioethics and taking the religious implications into account while Dr. Zafar stressed serious study by Third World nations on plant genetic rights, intellectual property rights and other issues.

Sri Lanka team

From Page 1

other finalists, who arrived in the city earlier on Tuesday, had a full practice session at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday morning. However, none of the cricketers were allowed to talk to the press.

It was inadvertently reported in our page yesterday that Sajewa de Silva was dropped from the Sri Lanka team that played in the Lahore Test. This was due to a message received on the Internet. In fact, the junior de Silva arrived with the team and Suresh Perera did not.

Players and officials of the Sri Lanka team: Aravinda de Silva (captain), Romesh Kaluwitharana, Marvan Atapattu, Chaminda Vaas, Upul Chandana, Pramodya Wickremasinghe, Sajewa de Silva, Avishka Gunawardena, Mahela Jayawardena, Ruwan Kalpage, Chandika Hathurusinghe, Ruchira Perera, Hashan Tilak-eratne, Russel Arnold, Roy Dias (coach) and Ranjit Fernando (manager).

4 bills seeking reserve seats for women in city corpns placed

Four Bills seeking one-third seats of Ward Commissioners of the City Corporations reserved for women and their election through direct vote, were introduced in Parliament yesterday, reports UNB.

The Bills also seek to empower the Chief Election Commissioner to extend the time for holding election to the four City Corporation of Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi by 180 days.

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman piloted the Bills. Explaining the objective of the bills, the minister said it would not be possible to hold polls on time due to the time constraint for delimitation of wards for women's reserved seats and completion of voter list.

Parvez

From Page 1
difficult situation arose in the patient's case. Director of the hospital Brigadier Badrul Munir told The Daily Star yesterday. Parvez is still in coma at the hospital's Intensive Care Unit.

Eminent neurosurgeon Prof. Rashid Uddin Ahmed of Bangabandhu Medical Hospital will head the medical board. Other members include two anaesthesiologists, two professors each from medicine and surgery departments.

Dry spell

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PDB sources said that load shedding was 80 MW yesterday in Dhaka city where more than 950 MW power is consumed in peak hours.

From May, a new barge-mounted power plant will add 100 MW power to the national grid. "But we can't say whether that will ensure a reliable and constant power supply," commented a source.

The government's Power System Master Plan projects a daily demand for 2800 MW this year. But, sources said, the present distribution network will allow the demand to rise to only 2500 MW - 2550 MW.

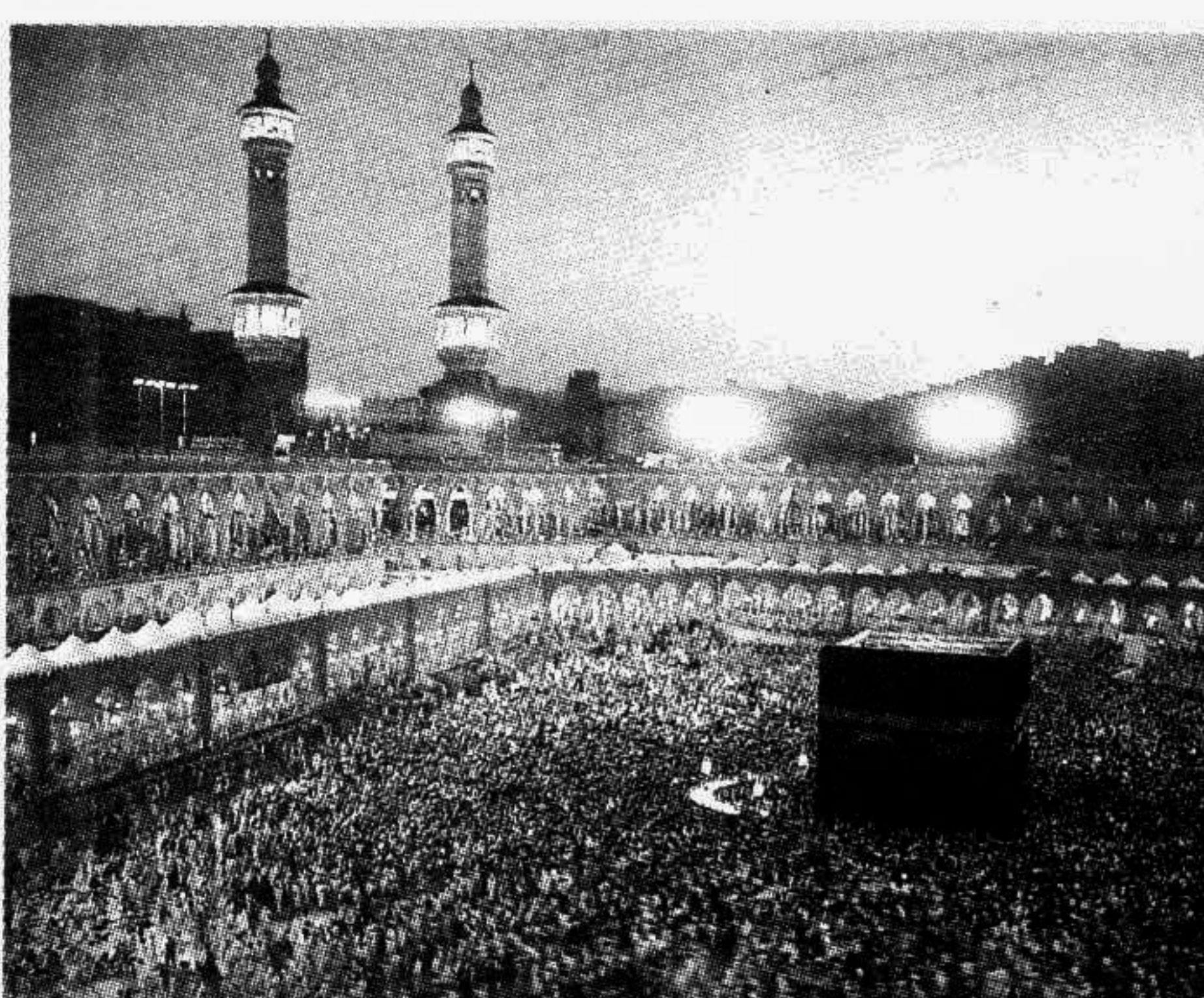
The load shedding situation in last summer was worse. With occasional countrywide black out, load shedding level had reached 600 MW - 650 MW at peak hours against a maximum demand for 2300 MW.



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