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PM's directive Identify criminals involved in bomb attack on policemen

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has expressed her deep shock at the killing of on-duty police constable Farhad Khan in a bomb attack after the BNP's pre-hartal torch procession in the city on Wednesday, reports BSS.

She also strongly condemned the heinous attack on policemen and ordered the authorities concerned to identify the criminals involved in the incident and take stern measures against them in accordance with law.

The Prime Minister, who is now visiting the United Kingdom, sent a condolence message expressing her profound sympathy to the several other injured persons, including policemen in the bomb explosion.

She prayed for peace of the departed soul of constable Farhad and expressed her sympathy to the members of his bereaved family.

The Prime Minister also condemned the killing of an old passenger following an attack on a running bus by the pickets during the hartal.

Dhaka-Calcutta commercial bus run begins today

Full operation of Dhaka-Calcutta direct bus service begins today, but passengers have to face customs hassles at border checkpoints initially like in the past.

All tickets have already been sold for the two buses which leave BRTC Kamalapur Terminal at 7 and 7:30 am. Each of the 47-seat buses carry 35 passengers.

Two buses of West Bengal Surface Transport Corporation will also depart Karunamoyee International Bus Terminal at Salt Lake in Calcutta at 6 and 6:30 am Indian time.

Budget session

From Page 1 the city Wednesday evening and accused BNP of the murder.

In his winding up speech, Deputy leader of the House and Local Government Minister Zilur Rahman said that BNP was enforcing hartal for no reason. "The party has no commitment for the welfare of the people. The only political objective of the party is to go to power by defeating the democratically elected government of Sheikh Hasina."

Defending the series of AL-enforced hartals during BNP rule, Zilur Rahman said that there was a specific political philosophy behind their anti-government agitations those days. "We wanted to introduce a system to make sure that the people can exercise their franchise freely, without any interference from the administration. There is no justification of enforcing hartal now."

Earlier, JP leader Anwar Hossain Monju pointing at the empty seats of members belonging to BNP, Jamaat and Ershad, JP said that the parliament was yet to be the centre of all national activities.

Hinting at Ershad's involvement in 'conspiracies' to topple the government, Manju said time has changed for generals to seize power through conspiracy. "Hasinas and Khaledas would come to power through elections. All concerned have to realise that there is no scope for Ayubs, Zias or Ershads to be in power in the 21st century."

He accused the ruling party of 'failing to probe the allegations of corruption by Ershad and some BNP leaders'.

Referring to the continued use of tax payers' money for the loss-making public sector industries, the over-sized cabinet and bureaucracy and on the count of so-called system loss, Manju warned that a time might come when people would refuse to pay taxes.

Earlier, rising on the so-called points of order, Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak, Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed, Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, Home Minister Mohammad Nasim and JP whip Advocate Fazle Rabbi condemned the killing of constable Farhad. They accused BNP of the murder.

"Accusing BNP men of 'deliberately' killing Farhad, Nasim said, "We have already started investigation. Those involved in the killing would be punished. None would be spared."

The other AL leaders criticised the BNP members of using 'abusive language' in the House during the budget session. None except Matia Chowdhury, however, admitted that the 'some' AL members also 'retaliated' in the same manner.

Besides adopting the national budget for fiscal 1999-2000, the 26 working-day session witnessed passage of five bills extending the deadlines for city corporation and Upazila elections.

The House also witnessed general debates on gas and power crises, law and order, prices of essential commodities and foreign policy.

4-stroke 3-wheelers arrive by Dec

By Inam Ahmed and Monjur Mahmud

How long will Dhaka city dwellers have to inhale the blue smoke from two-stroke engines?

Not too long, assures automobile dealers. With the increase in supplementary duty on two-stroke 'baby taxis' in this financial year's budget, the city will soon see the arrival of cleaner four-stroke three-wheelers.

The main importer of Bajaj three-wheelers, Menoka Motors, is importing the first batch of four-stroke baby taxis by December this year.

"We will first bring a test consignment of 25 taxis," says Kazi Inadil Hossain, Executive Director of Menoka Motors.

Then, in March, we will start commercial import. The newly imposed supplementary duty on two-stroke engines have made import of four-stroke engines viable.

Supplementary duty on two-stroke engines has been increased to 100 per cent from 50 per cent in the budget. This has raised the price of a two-stroke baby taxi to Tk 135,000 from Tk 115,500.

Four-stroke engines are exempted from any supplementary duty. Uttara Motors hopes to market four-stroke petrol three-wheelers at a price of Tk 140,000.

"We will not market two-stroke engines any more," says

Hossain. "The new duty structure has discouraged us from importing those."

But the disturbing news is that Menoka Motors is also planning to bring diesel baby taxis which will increase environmental pollution, rather than reducing it.

Experts say, diesel engines need 'very minute adjustment of fuel injectors to produce clean exhaust gas', which is not possible for the drivers to maintain. As a result, these spew a lot of pure unburnt diesel in the air. There are some diesel tempooos running on the roads now, all emitting black smoke.

Some 35,000 two-stroke baby taxis are plying on the city

roads now, emitting a concoction of petrol and unburnt lubricant which is highly hazardous for health. Some one million people commute daily on these three-wheelers.

Earlier last year, the government had banned import of two-stroke baby taxis, but later the order was withdrawn in the face of agitation by their owners.

On the other hand, Atlas Bangladesh Ltd, a subsidiary of Bangladesh Steel Engineering Corporation (BSEC), has developed an improved version of its 'Mishuk' three-wheeler.

The existing Mishuk is unsafe and under-powered because



A four-stroke three wheeler. —Star photo

13 roasted alive in Calcutta

From Sakyasen Mitra

CALCUTTA, July 8: Thirteen people were roasted alive when a bulb factory in which they were working caught fire this morning. The fire started when a 50 litre kerosene container burst into flames. Of the 13, six were women.

The police are now looking for Chandan and Swapan Dasgupta, the owners of the factory. The two incidentally are also brothers. The 'Lampco' Bulb factory is situated at Rajarhat Road. Approximately 50 people were working in the morning shift when the fire started.

Most of the workers in the factory reportedly were illegal Bangladesh immigrants.

The areas in and around Rajarhat and Baguihati have been for the last few years become a safe place for the lower middle class Bangladeshis to set up their homes, said a resident.

Till the time of writing this copy, the police have not been able to identify the 13 that have been burnt. Moreover, there have been no claims for the bodies. So the police are at a loss as to the real records of the deceased.

Local people staying in the area said, that most of the workers in Lampco were from Bangladesh. "We just knew some of them and were quite sure that they were from the other side of the border."

Gas export

From Page 1 rules and regulations for doing business over there. He said trade volume between Bangladesh and UK remarkably increased, and his country was the third largest foreign investor in Bangladesh.

"Bangladesh has enormous possibilities to develop through its gas sector," said the British minister.

Stable and transparent regime with minimum government interference would increase the investment flow to Bangladesh, he said, suggesting making BOI more effective and simplifying the rules to promote business.

State minister for foreign affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, chairman of the Privatisation Board Kazi Zafarullah and Bangladesh high commissioner in UK A H Mahmud Ali and the business leaders accompanying the prime minister were present in the seminar.

Present, among others, were FBCCI president Abdul Awal Minto, MCCI president Mahboob Jamil, BCI president Khondker Mosharrar Hossain, DCCI president M H Rahman, BGMEA president Anisur Rahman Sinha, FBCCI vice president M A Munim, former FBCCI president Yusuf Abudullah Hossain, UNB chief editor Enayetullah Khan and BGMEA Vice-President Anisul Haq.

Food security strategies

Plan for million tonnes reserve

By Reaz Ahmad

The government is considering some 'food security strategies' to do away with continued dependence on import of food, officials sources said.

The strategies include keeping the public sector food reserve at one million tonnes at the minimum always and providing the vulnerable section of the rural poor with free food for at least two months during lean period of the year when there are lesser job opportunities in the countryside.

Besides, the sources said, the government is not in favour of getting 'food aid in terms of cash', as is being considered by European donors.

A highly placed source told The Daily Star that contrary to donors' suggestion of keeping public sector food stock at seven lakh tonnes, the government feels that one million tonnes would be a 'safer ceiling'. However, the storage facilities are not up to the mark as repair of age-old silos and godowns is long overdue.

Agriculture Ministry anticipates that under the New Trade Regimes, the likely increase in prices of food and other agricultural products in international market may call for

modifications in the national food security policies and strategies, including consumer price policy for food.

The issue of food security surfaced as a major challenge amidst mounting pressure on the public exchequer to meet the huge food import bill.

The government had to borrow 338 million US dollars from IMF and IDA to meet the food import bill of 733 million US dollars in 1998-99, according to official statistics.

Food import had direct impact on in the foreign exchange reserve position. Against a target of 350,000 tonnes of food import by the public sector from the government's own resources, it had to import one million tonnes due to the loss of aman crop in the devastating floods last year.

The government went for borrowing to meet the additional cost for food import. The imports till April this year stood at 756,000 tonnes.

In the previous fiscal year, private sector food imports totalled a little over one million tonnes while in 1998-99, the imports crossed three million tonnes.

A bumper harvest of boro crop this year greatly improved the food situation, but by that time a lot of money was already spent without taking any risk of a food crisis in the country, an official pointed out.

"It is not sufficient to raise production of food in the country. It is also essential to strengthen the food security system", Finance Minister SAMS Kibria said while presenting the national budget for 1999-2000 in the Jatiya Sangsad last month.

His statement was in line with the government's pledge to development partners in April this year that Bangladesh would chart out its own national food security strategy. The European Union is now showing interest in providing assistance for this.

Presently, there are three objectives of the Public Food Distribution System. First, maintenance of adequate food stock so that speculative activities in food market are discouraged. Second, providing food to the distressed groups. The third objective is to ensure fair price for farmers so that they do not suffer if food production increases.

Hand over power to caretaker govt for fresh polls: Khaleda

Opposition leader Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday said the people rejected the 'anti-people budget and expressed no-confidence' in the government by observing hartal, reports UNB.

In a post-hartal statement she said the people took stand against this government for its misrule, politicisation of the administration and conspiracy to give corridor to India.

The BNP Chairperson congratulated the countymen for observing the countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal enforced by the opposition alliance led by her party.

She called upon the government to give up the path of oppression and repression and hand over power to a caretaker government calling fresh election.

Alleged dacoit killed in clash with police

From Staff Correspondent CHITTAGONG, July 8: An alleged dacoit was killed and another injured during a shootout with police in Jangalia hill area under Lohagara thana, 30 miles off the city, this morning.

The dead was identified as Jamal Uddin 22. Police said the shootout began at 7 am when a team of patrol police challenged a group of dacoits at Jangalia. Both police and dacoits traded fire for about an hour.

Police caught two injured dacoits while others managed to flee. Of the injured, Jamal Uddin later succumbed to his bullet injuries.

Police recovered two guns from their possession.

Sharif returns, briefs top military and cabinet officials

ISLAMABAD, July 8: Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif briefed top military and cabinet officials today on a controversial plan agreed in Washington to get Muslim militant fighters to withdraw from Indian Kashmir, report agencies.

The meeting was attended by the army chief, General Pervez Musharraf, intelligence chiefs, foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz and other top political and military officials, official sources said. No statement was expected to be issued.

Earlier, Sharif returned to Pakistan ending a controversial

Mongla Port workers postpone today's strike

BAGERHAT, July 8: Mongla Port Workers' Association postponed its strike scheduled for tomorrow till Sunday following an assurance given by the authorities, reports UNB.

The association has called the strike at the port to realise their 12-point demand, which include enhancement of their salary and medical and housing facilities.

At a rally in the port area today, the association leaders said they have been holding talks with the Port Stevedores Association for last three days to reach a consensus.

State Minister for Relief Talukdar Abdul Khaleq and Port Chairman Sharif Atiqur Rahman also attended the meeting.

They have also threatened to go for an indefinite strike from Monday if their demands are not met by the period.

Pangu Hospital

From Page 1 seek admission to the hospital. They were trying to lure the patients to get 'better' treatment by 'more experienced doctors' at the clinics.

"We earn our livelihood by doing this and I don't think it is unethical," said a broker requesting not to be identified.

A fellow broker standing near a doctor's room said, "I am doing this to help patients get better treatment and there is nothing wrong in it. In return, I am paid by the clinics or individual doctors."

Asked how do they convince patients and what is the system of payment, another broker asking not to be named said, "We offer package deal if the patients agree, we send them to our contacts (clinics). At times, depending on the urgency, we accompany the patients to our contacts."

A ward boy on emergency duty said, "They (brokers) enter the OTs and virtually 'steal' patients. If we resist, they threaten to kill us. In one such incident last year, they attacked one of our colleagues with knife, damaging his vocal cord."

Many patients who spoke to this correspondent complained of harassment by brokers if they did not agree to their proposals.

Many of the doctors and other officials at the hospitals narrated their bitter experience while attempting to resist the activities of brokers. "The day you oust one (dawal), the next day you will be their target. So it is better to keep quiet," said a senior doctor.

There were also allegations that a section of doctors and staff are involved in sending patients to clinics for 'commission'.

When contacted, Director of the hospital Prof Md Abdus Samad Sheikh admitted that the issue of brokers is a major problem and it is harming the institution in many ways.

He said, "To check such illegal business, I have taken a few steps including transferring some of those found to have links with the dalals. I have also warned doctors to keep themselves away from such practice, otherwise they may face serious consequences."

"I have been instructed by the health minister to take drastic action. For that I need help from the law enforcers. But despite repeated requests, police action is virtually non-existent."

When contacted, Officer-in-Charge of Tejgon police station Mohsinuzzaman said, "I cannot arrest any one unless I have specific names of accused persons. Regarding this, we have requested the hospital authorities to send us a list of those involved in such business, but so far I have not received it."

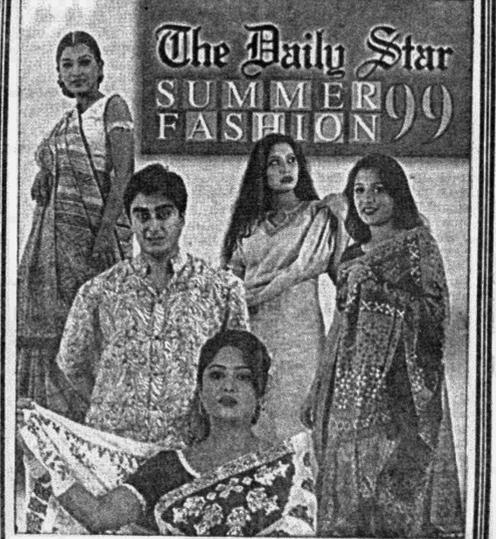
He ruled out that police was helping the brokers. Asked for his comments on the issue, Health and Family Welfare Minister Salahuddin Yusuf said, "I have transferred the previous director of the hospital and replaced him with a more active director, who has been instructed to resolve the problem."

He said, "So far reports have indicated that the activities of brokers are on the decline and we are planning more extensive drives to eliminate the problem."

Clarification

The Public Service Commission has issued a clarification on a news item headlined 'PSC rejects proposal' published in The Daily Star yesterday.

The clarification said: On the suggestion of some of the Members of the Public Service Commission, this particular agenda item was included for discussion in the 6th general meeting of the Public Service Commission held on 28 June. Threadbare discussion was held in the meeting and some of the members were actually in favour of reintroduction of the manual tabulation side by side with the existing tabulation done by the computer. Anyhow at last it was the unanimous decision of the Commission that the existing system of tabulation of BCS examination results by computer should be modernised instead of reintroduction of the manual tabulation side by side with the computer system. As such the said news about submission of a proposal by the Chairman and outright rejection of it by the Members of the Commission is not correct at all.



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Cracker blasts mark hartal

From Page 1 bari, Syedabad, Kakrail, Topkhana, Shahbagh and Tikatuli areas.

Witnesses said unknown people from hideouts threw cocktails at police in many parts of the city. They said about 8 to 10 bombs exploded near Syedabad Bridge at about 11:55 p.m.

Most of the crackers blasted close to the Demra police station (thana) OC (Officer-in-Charge) Halim and some other police personnel, who were on the spot reported. However, none was injured.

After the incident, sporadic bombs were also exploded at Jatrabari and Syedabad areas between 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. Police fired a number of tear gas canisters to disperse the criminals who resorted to a reign of terror by blasting bombs.

Except a few riot police, the authorities deployed paramilitary BDR, armed police and Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) police in different strategic points and important establishments.

The number of police deployed for hartal was less than previous times as authorities refrained from deploying riot police after Wednesday's death of a police constable.

But police in almost all areas in the city was inactive and avoided confrontation with opposition activists. The activists were seen picketing and obstructing rickshaws and auto-rickshaws freely in front of police.

A powerful bomb exploded in front of the Nightangle restaurant in Kakrail at about 12:28 p.m. while another two were blasted near the Jatiya Press Club at about 3:40 p.m. but nobody was injured.

BNP activists started tight picketing in front of their party central office at Naya Paltan after they found the police inactive. They set fire to a rickshaw there and chanted slogans in support of the hartal at about 12:25 p.m.

All modes of vehicles, except rickshaws and some state-run BRTC buses and private minibuses were off the streets. Shops and other business establishments remained closed. Presence in both government and private offices was thin.

Appearance of Awami League activists in the city streets was very little unlike in the past. The ruling party, however, brought out a procession from its central office in the morning, but no senior leader was seen.

AL activists also brought out some anti-hartal processions

in different parts of the city, but they did not try to obstruct the opposition activists.

Presence of activists of BNP and its allies was also thin in the morning but many came out in the street after they found the police inactive. BNP leaders and workers brought out a series of processions in the city and chanted slogans against the budget as well as the government.

BNP leaders Dr Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain, Abdul Mattin Chowdhury, Abdullah Al Nomam, Sadek Hossain Khoka, Mirza Abbas, Fazlur Rahman Patal, Amanullah Aman, Joyal Abedin Faruq, Ehsanul Haq Milon, Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, ZA Khan and Khairul Kabir Khokon led the processions.

Other opposition parties, including Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami, Islamic Oikya Jote brought out separate processions in the city during the hartal hour.

In the afternoon, BNP organised a big post-hartal rally



The unidentified commuter who died during yesterday's hartal. —Star photo

in front of the party's central office. Presided over by city BNP convener Sadek Hossain Khoka MP, it was addressed, among others, by Mirza Abbas, Fazlur Rahman Patal, Amanullah Aman, Joyal Abedin Faruq, Gayeshwar Chandra Roy and ZA Khan.

Addressing the rally, the BNP leaders blamed the ruling Awami League for the explosion of bombs in the city's Gulistan area Wednesday night that left a police man killed and wounded many others.

They said the spot of the murder is close to the Awami League head office and the area is totally controlled by the ruling party. They alleged that AL

dent was reported from Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna metropolitan areas, Sylhet and Barisal divisional headquarters and also other districts.

UNB reports from Chittagong said at least 25 people, including a policeman, were injured in clashes between police and pickets during the hartal.

Police also said no bus, truck or lorry plying in the long-route during the hartal hours, but movement of train and launch was usual. Activities in mills, factories and industries at the Export Processing Zones (EPZs) were normal. Loading and unloading of goods at Mongla and Chittagong ports were normal too, while offices, courts, bank and insurance companies remained open.