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Form JS body to probe charges against my sons: Chief Whip

By Staff Correspondent
Jatiya Sangsad Chief Whip Abul Hasnat Abdullah yesterday urged Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury to form a parliamentary committee to probe allegations of criminal activities against his sons.

"Please investigate the matter and disclose it in the House so that people can know the fact," he appealed to the Chair. The Speaker told the House that he would consider forming a body.

Neither Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina nor Home Minister Mohammad Nasim was present in the House at that time.

The Chief Whip's appeal came a day after press reports that his youngest son Ashique Abdullah was allegedly involved in kidnapping a schoolboy in the city. He spoke on the issue while participating in the general discussion on the proposed budget for 2000-01.

His oldest son Sadek Abdullah was earlier accused of forcibly occupying a house in the city, which he had rented earlier.

"If the charges are proved, I will definitely hand them over to police in presence of journalists," he said.

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'ISI had offered me crores of taka'

By Staff Correspondent
Chief Whip Abul Hasnat Abdullah disclosed in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday that Pakistani intelligence service ISI had offered him crores of taka when he was negotiating the CHT peace accord with tribal insurgents.

Abul Hasnat, who headed the parliamentary committee that signed the accord in December 1997, made the disclosure while taking part in the general discussion on budget.

Signing of the accord ended two decades' insurgency in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

"I never said before what kind of pressure I had to sustain during the peace talks. They gave me death threat. I also never disclosed to the press earlier that ISI offered me crores of Taka," the chief whip said without mentioning why he was offered the money.

Abul Hasnat said, like his father, he is also honest and has integrity.

A minister in the Bangladesh Cabinet, his father

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Torrential rain triggers flash flood 11 killed in hill, wall collapse in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, June 24: Eleven people including six children died as walls and hills collapsed during torrential rain in the port city and its adjoining areas today.

The rain also triggered flash flood here.

A baby remained missing and three others were injured when a wall collapsed at Muradpur in the city today, police and witnesses said.

Five people were killed in hill collapse in Chittagong University area. The dead were identified as Sufia Khanam, 45, Munni Aktar, 7, Md Rubel, 6, Abdur Rahim, 7 and Fatem Aktar, 3. The hill collapse in the University area also disrupted road communications on the

campus.

Johra Khatun, 30 and her son Jahir, 9 died in hill collapse at Tangir Pahar behind Amin Jute Mills while Gita Rani, 16, was killed in a wall collapse at Muradpur in the city today.

A ten-year old boy Al Amin drowned in flood water when he

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Zillur Rahman, Minister for Local Government and Rural Development, speaking at a dialogue on strengthening Local Government at CIRDAP auditorium yesterday. Jointly organised by Centre for Policy Dialogue and CARE it was chaired by Prof Muhammad Yunus of Grameen Bank (second from left), BNP leader Barrister Nazmul Huda, MP and Prof Rehman Sobhan of CPD are also seen in the picture.

— Star photo

In case an electoral alliance fails BNP also to keep standby its own candidates

By Rezaul Karim

BNP is now giving emphasis on organisational matters, keeping all options open as regards contesting the next general election -- alone, forming an electoral alliance or having understanding with like minded parties.

Party sources said it has decided first to select its own candidates for all the 300 Jatiya Sangsad seats and then to examine whether an electoral alliance would benefit the party or not.

"The party has kept all options open, including contesting the polls alone, going for a broader electoral alliance with its alliance partners and others and giving concession to some smaller parties," a top leader of the BNP told this correspondent.

The options are kept open as still there is apprehension in the party that Ershad-led Jatiya Party 'may quit the alliance at the eleventh hour,' he said.

BNP leaders and activists at all levels have been asked to gear up party activities, overcome all organisational weakness and side by side prepare for the next elections, sources mentioned.

The party has no plan to go for any action programme at least in the next two months to intensify the present movement. Instead it will concentrate on organisational activities.

A BNP policy maker said yesterday the party's field level activists have been instructed to take all preparations for the next general election and the central leadership is 'now assessing the party's actual position' in all the 300 parliamentary constituencies.

All information about BNP's possible candidates and their alternatives are being collected. Party Chairperson Khaleda Zia herself is also gathering information from all concerned.

The Chairperson has already interviewed about 50 party MPs and some other people at her Banani office and heard from them the situation in their respective constituencies, he said.

During the meetings with the MPs, sources said, Khaleda Zia advised them to rush to their respective areas, resolve all existing problems especially intra-party feuds and take preparation for the next election.

"There is no possibility of changing the nomination of sitting MPs," said a senior leader of the party. He however did not want to be named.

Sources said after meeting all the party MPs, Khaleda Zia will meet BNP candidates defeated in the last general election. She will then meet district and thana level leaders to take a final decision about selecting party candidates for the next polls.

A high level special team formed by the BNP Chairperson, now studying the party position in the constituencies, has been asked to gather information through field visits.

Though BNP agrees in principle to form an electoral alliance to defeat the ruling Awami League, the policy making body is not interested to start negotiation with Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islamic Oikya Jote now to settle sharing of seats, the policy makers favours discussing it before the polls, a top leader of the party said seeking anonymity.

The party will allocate at best 70 seats to its electoral alliance partners, if such an alliance is formed, he added.

Container port at Patenga We'll resist move even at the cost of our lives: Ctg Mayor

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, June 24: A token mass hunger strike, organised by Chittagong Bandar Unnayan Forum (CBUF), was observed here today to protest government's move for allowing installation of a private container port at Patenga by Stevedoring Services of America (SSA).

Several hundred people led by the Mayor of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) A B M Mohiuddin Chowdhury joined the hunger strike on the premises of Chittagong Press Club from 10 am to 5 pm.

Addressing a rally at the venue of mass hunger strike, the CCC Mayor announced that hunger strike would be organised in all the 41 wards of the

port city to protest the move for allowing a private container port.

"We will not allow installation of private container port at the mouth of Karnaphuli river by American company SSA," Mohiuddin said.

"We will resist the move even at the cost of our lives," said Mohiuddin, adding "we will not accept any agreement in this regard."

He urged the government not to lease the lands near Chittagong port under any circumstances.

The CCC Mayor warned that people who have clandestine links with SSA will be declared persona non grata in the port

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Cargo handling suspended at Ctg port

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, June 24: Cargo handling at Chittagong port was suspended tonight as the agitating dock workers stopped gang-bookings for night shift over a dispute with the stevedores, port sources said.

The dock workers refused to take gang-bookings from 8 pm demanding tips or extra pay for unloading the imported vehicles from a ship at jetty No 4, sources informed.

The dock workers were locked in a dispute with the stevedores yesterday over unloading of imported vehicles from a ship, they said.

As the stevedores declined to pay tips or extra money for unloading imported vehicles, the dockers at Chittagong port jointly decided to stop gang-bookings, forcing suspension of cargo handling in all the ships at Chittagong port.

An emergency meeting will be held tomorrow with port officials, leaders of stevedores and dock workers to break the stalemate, port sources said.

One-fifth of WASA pipelines needs immediate replacement

By Raziur Rahman

Nearly one fifth of about 2000 km water supply pipeline of WASA in the city is either not serviceable or their life span has expired, sources in WASA said.

Leakage in the dilapidated pipes is one of the main reasons for contamination of WASA water. These need immediate replacement, they said.

More than 15 percent of the pipeline is of asbestos cement (AC) and 'mild steel' (MS), most of which were installed 30 to 40 years back. In the old part of the city, a large portion of the

pipeline is of cast iron (CI), laid in early 40s, they said.

Residents of a large portion of Dhanmondi and some parts of Motijheel and Mohammadpur areas are getting supply water through MS pipes.

WASA water is supplied through AC pipeline in most areas of Lalmonirhat, Khilgaon, Mogbazar, Mallabagh, Mirpur and few areas of Banani Mohammadpur and Segunbagicha.

In Lalbagh, Chakbazar, Moulabbhazar, Sadarghat, Banglabazar, Gandaria, Islampur, Shutrampur, Bangsal, Ar-

manitola and some areas of Narinda, water is supplied through CI pipes, installed during the British period.

Most of the AC pipes have developed leaks and cracks and MS pipes have become rusty and weak, resulting in leakage, the sources said.

At places, the CI pipes have become clogged due to deposit of different chemicals and filth, obstructing water supply. Besides, the old iron pipes produce 'iron bacteria' inside.

The leaks and cracks which

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Stop politicising local govt

Speakers at CPD-CARE dialogue demand

By Staff Correspondent

Speakers at a dialogue in the city yesterday held political influence and lack of 'local resources' as the main obstacles to effective governments (LGs) and called upon the government and the political parties to refrain from 'politicising' LGs to ensure accountability of those.

They underscored the need for setting up a permanent local government commission and a local government finance commission to realise this objective.

The dialogue on "Strengthening Local Government: Recent Experience and Future Agenda", was jointly organised by Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and CARE.

Eminent economist and Managing Director of Grameen Bank Prof Muhammad Yunus was in the chair.

Minister for Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) Zillur Rahman was chief guest at the dialogue and former information minister and BNP leader Nazmul Huda was special guest.

Zillur Rahman said the present government has taken various steps to reform local governments to give democracy an institutional shape and decentralise power at grassroots level.

The reform programme taken up in 1997 provided for women's reserved seats in Union Parishads (UPs) and it helped empowerment of women in villages, he said.

The minister further said the government would shortly announce higher allowances for UP Chairmen and members keeping their efforts in view.

Nazmul Huda said that in 1991, the then BNP government had initiated reforms in local governments and made provisions for women's reserved seats in UPs.

A commission was set up and on the basis of its report, law was made in this regard, he added.

A Prof Muhammad Yunus stressed united efforts to make local governments effective and ensure participation of

grassroots level people in administration.

"The local government system has long been in a trap and we have to get rid of the traditional concept of local governments as wheat thieves,"

He said, "We must not blame each other but our thrust should be on developing ways and means to achieve our objectives in this field."

Referring to the recent boom in Information Technology (IT) sector, he said local government bodies could be made more effective through use of IT.

These bodies could run website and update their information-- birth-death record, voters' list and many other local features-- in their web-page. This is more longer a tough job, Prof Yunus noted.

Prof Zarina Rahman Khan, in her key-note paper observed that the government should start following up the reform process both with regard to empowerment of women as well as

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Two children killed in wall collapse

By Staff Correspondent

Two children playing in the courtyard of a house at Jurain in the city were killed when a boundary wall of the house collapsed as a truck rammed it, police said.

Sumona, four and a half year old daughter of Bachchu Miah, died on the spot and her maternal cousin Hasna, 4, daughter of Haris Miah, was declared dead on arrival at the Mitford Hospital.

Both the girls were playing in the courtyard of the house at 434 East Jurain Medical Road under Shyampur police station, at about 10 am, police said.

The speeding truck hit the boundary wall while it was taking turn witnesses said.

Local people caught the driver while he was fleeing. They beat up the driver before handing him over to the police.

Anwar Hossain Maternal uncle of the victims, filed a case accusing the driver of the killing, police said. Police seized the truck.

CEPZ unrest: 20 workers sent to jail

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, June 24: Twenty workers of Chittagong Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) arrested by police on Thursday night, were sent to Chittagong jail.

They were arrested on charge of creating unrest in the CEPZ, police said.

Meanwhile, the agitating workers of US company Qualitex Group today also staged sit-in in front of the factory premises demanding reinstatement of 15 workers, CEPZ sources said.

Production in three towel factories of Qualitex Group remained suspended for the past 14 days. Unrest began there when the workers were demanding wages as 1993 circular which was kept in abeyance by BEPZA.

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