

JS body on foreign ministry slams Raja's remarks

By Staff Correspondent

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Foreign Ministry at a meeting yesterday condemned the audacious comments made recently by Pakistan's Deputy High Commissioner in Dhaka about the country's War of Independence and his conduct devoid of diplomatic norms.

Chaired by Committee chief Dr Mohammad Selim, the meeting also discussed at length the progress of implementation of the resolutions adopted at the committee's previous meetings.

The meeting was told that the authorities concerned were making sincere efforts to implement the suggestions of the committee.

It also discussed the prime minister's participation in the ninth IOC conference held at Doha during November 12-14 last year and condoled the death of Awami League MP Syed Kamal Bakht.

Chairman of the committee apprised the meeting of his experiences when he attended a seminar on Peace and Security in Asia held in Japan recently.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Choudhury and Miriam Begum attended the meeting among others.

Alleged mugger succumbs to injuries at DMCH

By Staff Correspondent

An alleged mugger, who was injured in a mob beating at Section-14 Mirpur on December 25, died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Nabi Hossain alias Jasim, son of Abdur Rashid of Section-14, Mirpur.

Mob beat up Jasim while he tried to snatch away valuables from a pedestrian on December 25 at Mirpur, police said.

Police rescued Jasim in a critical condition and sent him to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

"Jasim was an employee of a shop at Mirpur in the city" one of his cousins said.

Jasim was an accused in a mugging case recorded with Pallabi police station, duty officer of Pallabi thana said.

A case was filed in this regard.

AL leader slaughtered in Naogaon

NAOGAON, Jan 4: An Awami League leader was slaughtered by unidentified assailants in Raninagar upazila yesterday, reports UNB.

The assailants stabbed Mojibar Rahman, 48, indiscriminately and then slaughtered him on Abadpukur-Jalkoi road at about 6.30 pm.

They fled the scene firing several shots.

Mojibar Rahman, vice president of local Awami League unit and a former member of Ekdala Union Parishad, came under attack while he was returning home at village Dakshar.

A case was filed with Raninagar thana, but none was arrested till filing of this report at 5 pm today.

BNP's press confce today

Opposition BNP will apprise the people of the party's decisive stance against "misuse" of the Public Safety Act through a press conference today, reports UNB.

Deputy Leader of the opposition Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury will address the conference at 29 Minto Road at 4 pm, a party release said.

BNP's position regarding the Speaker's letter to opposition leader Khaleda Zia asking her to join the January 11 parliament session may also be made clear to the press.

Boral murder: Another held

BAGERHAT, Jan 4: A charged accused in Awami League leader Kalidas Boral murder case was sent to jail after he surrendered before a court here today, reports UNB.

With the arrest of Chan Mia Molla, police have so far arrested eight people, among 22 charged accused, all are leaders and supporters of ruling Awami League.

Earlier, Chan Mia surrendered before High Court but the court ordered him to appear before the lower court.

However, 14 others remained at large after the killing of district Awami League general secretary Kalidas Boral on August 20.

PDB poised to turn down Marubeni amendments

"Decisive negotiation meeting" on January 10

By Sharier Khan

The Power Development Board (PDB) will hold a "decisive negotiation meeting" on January 10 with Japanese company Marubeni on the 450 MW Meghnaughat Phase-2 power plant, sources said.

Marubeni earlier agreed to set up and operate the plant as per terms and conditions set for the Meghnaughat Phase-1 plant. But it later proposed some amendments, which "grossly deviate" from the agreement (for Phase-1 plant) and are "less favourable" to Bangladesh, the sources said. The Phase-1 plant is being installed by US company AES.

The government is unlikely to accept the proposals and stick to its earlier decision to implement the Phase-2 project as per terms and conditions under which the Phase-1 plant is being built.

Since losing the bidding for the Phase-1 plant in 1997 to AES, Marubeni has been strongly lobbying with different circles to get the Phase-2 project.

In 1998, it had proposed to the government that it would install the Phase-2 plant as per terms and conditions including the power tariff set for the Phase-1 plant.

Accordingly, the Cabinet Purchase Committee gave a green signal PDB to involve Marubeni in the Phase-2 plant on condition that the agreement is as per the terms fixed for the first one.

Marubeni began unsolicited negotiations in late

October. At one stage, Marubeni offered free electricity worth five million dollars during the Initial Operating Period (IOP) instead of 45 million dollars as in the agreement for Phase-1 plant. The proposal was discussed at several meetings and in all the meetings the government clearly said that this was not acceptable.

Marubeni then calculated the value of free electricity offered by AES at 35 million dollars and gave some other proposals.

It said, instead of giving free electricity worth 35 million dollars during the IOP, it will give free electricity worth 5.7 million dollars before the end of the 22-year contract period and give the plant to PDB as gift when the contract will expire.

After 22 years of operation, the plant will be worth 31.4 million dollars, it claimed.

It argued that the plant's value would still remain at 31.4 million dollars even after 22 years of operation because its longevity would be 35 years.

It however said the plant will need overhauling in the 26th year, which will cost around 25 million dollars. Its value will remain at 31.4 million dollars even after the overhauling, it claimed.

Marubeni also said that the Phase-2 plant will need only 35 acres of land, which is half the area as per the terms fixed for the first one.

See page 11 col 7

DCC drive to rid footpaths of hawkers may hit snag

By Razirul Rahman

Lack of coordination among the agencies concerned, absence of permanent monitoring cells and shortage of required manpower might lead to failure of the on-going drive for eviction of hawkers from pavements in the city and removal of unauthorised roadside shops, officials concerned and city dwellers fear.

The drive launched by Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and Dhaka Metropolitan police (DMP) after the Eid holidays has greatly eased movement of hawkers as well as vehicles in some of the busiest areas in the city. But whether this would continue when usual activities in the city resume is a question agitating the minds of many.

Top officials of DCC and DMP used to blame each other for allowing hawkers to occupy pavements and also parts of roads for years. But this time, officials of both expressed their determination to keep the city roads and pavements free of hawkers as long as possible, sources pointed out.

Hawkers have already been evicted from pavements in the busiest areas like Gulistan, Firmgate, Purana Paltan, Karwan Bazar, Hatirpool, Shapla Chattar, Nirkhali and New Market.

Besides, unauthorised shops were removed and hawkers evicted from footpaths and roads in Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), BUET, Panthapath and Lalbagh areas.

Asked about the drive, pedestrians, traders at various markets, passengers of vehicles, traffic police and many others expressed their satisfaction. They, however, questioned, "How long would this improved situation last?"

Similar drives failed in the past, they recalled.

A top official of DMP said DCC is supposed to keep pavements and roads free from illegal occupation. He, however, admitted that under DMP Act, police are also supposed take care of anything that obstructs movement people and vehicles.

See page 11 col 7

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