

PM blasts vandalism

From page 1

tion politics.

She deplored the violence by BNP-backed lawyers who kicked the door of the chamber of the Chief Justice and gheraoed him.

Sheikh Hasina said the lawyers' act was unjustified as "everything is being done under provision of the Constitution."

In this context, she referred to the violence let loose in Chittagong by a BNP MP and his son and said they had attacked a shopkeeper and ransacked his shop during Ramadan. But when the government filed a case under the Public Safety Act, they started agitation.

The Prime Minister alleged that the BNP in alliance with Jamaat was trying to let loose terrorism in the country in a planned way. She alerted the people about such acts.

"You will have to be vocal against this unholy alliance," she told the audience after inaugurating a major road bridge and an EPZ here earlier in the day.

Hasina said when the government was trying to ensure development in all sectors, the BNP-led opposition alliance was trying to disrupt development. The people will not cast vote in favour of terrorists and anarchists, she cautioned her opponents.

She urged the people to vote for Awami League in the coming polls to ensure economic prosperity of the people through completion of the ongoing development work.

Hasina said the anti-liberation alliance of BNP, Jatiya Party and Jamaat do not want development of the country.

The Prime Minister alleged that the opposition leader handed arms to her student activists to continue terrorist acts in the

country.

"She (Khaleda) considered the students who can use arms competent for leading Chhattri Dal; she wants to use the armed cadres to steal votes," Hasina alleged.

Earlier in the day, the Prime Minister laid the foundation of the country's second largest bridge on the Padma to develop a communication network that, she said, would open up a new gateway for economic development.

"Development of communication system is one of the prerequisites for development of a country," she said, referring to her government's massive programmes in the communication sector that started with the successful commissioning of the landmark Bangabandhu Bridge on the Jamuna in 1997.

The Prime Minister announced at the function that this important bridge of the western region would be named after Capt Shaheed M Mansur Ali, one of the main organisers of the Liberation War and a victim of jail killing on November 3, 1975.

The 1.78 km bridge, will be completed in three years at an estimated cost of Tk 650 crore with assistance from the government of Japan.

"The second largest bridge, I hope, would develop road links among the northwestern and southwestern districts and add unprecedented vigour in overall economic activities," the Prime Minister said.

Further, she said, the bridge would accelerate future trade and business with Nepal by easing transportation via Bang-labandh transit.

Cause of acid throwing

From page 12

so far contributed Tk 20,76,866 to the fund.

The Prothom Alo editor also said the culprits are escaping punishment by taking advantage of loopholes in the existing laws. He urged all to come forward to eliminate the crime from the society.

Fazila, an acid victim who is currently working with the Acid Survivors Foundation, informed that a neighbour poured acid on her after she declined to marry him at Laksam in Comilla in 1999. At the time, she was preparing to sit for the SSC examinations.

Nurunnahar of Patuakhali, Peyara of Gazipur, Jesmin of Barisal and Monwara of Sirajganj, all acid victims, also urged all concerned to take proper steps to devise effective ways to stop such crime.

The commerce secretary informed that the government has already taken some steps to control import and use of acid under the Essential Commodity Act. Some other steps are going to be taken soon.

He, however, admitted that incidents of acid pouring cannot be stopped by merely taking these steps. He emphasised

Auranga-Aslam enmity?

From page 1

Auranga's followers were shot dead near Farm Gate in 1999 by Aslam's associates.

Taleb, the latest victim of the long-standing rivalry, is believed to have been Auranga's 'right hand.' A member of the convening committee of Jubo League Dhaka (North) and prospective commissioner candidate for Ward No. 99 was gunned down, reportedly by Aslam's men, as he came out of a mosque after saying his Jum'a prayer.

Taleb became an eyesore for Aslam's men as he asserted control on toll collection from Farm Gate autorickshaw stand and Karwan Bazar. He was also involved in tender business.

Sources said that local Jatiya

Party leader Dildar who had allegedly fired gunshots in front of Taleb's residence a couple of months back, was also involved in the killing and so were his younger brother Babul, also a commissioner candidate, and Milan, allegedly member of the Sweden Aslam gang.

Meanwhile, a murder case accusing seven persons was filed in Teigaon thana in this connection. None was however arrested in connection with the killing till the filing of this report at 7:30pm last night.

When contacted, duty officer of Teigaon police said that they were on the case and trying to find out clues. "We are also trying to nab the killers of Taleb," they added.

Biman

From page 1

offers received in response to Biman's Request for Proposal are still at evaluation stage. Being a complicated process, it is likely to take some time," it said.

"As stated by the Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism, it is once again reiterated that final decision on Lease/Lease Purchase/Lease with Option to Purchase of aircraft will be taken only after the issue regarding Strategic Partner is finalised. Aircraft procurement being a complicated process, necessary ground work is being completed so that decision regarding aircraft procurement can be taken expeditiously after finalisation of Strategic Partner," it added.

Our reply: We stand by the story. The clarification failed to mention how Max Aero Space qualified for the Request for Proposal (RFP).

Biman violated its set rules for the process, which specified that bidders must have its own aircraft. But records show Max does not have Airbus A 340-300 in its inventory. It procures spares and obsolete Boeing 727 mainly for offering those as 'homes'.

Suo moto on DC

From page 12

arrest.

Atiar Rahman, father of the boy, appeared before the magistrate's court with Lebu on his shoulder on January 10 and granting bail to his son.

No action was taken against the police officer who had submitted the charge sheet in the case.

Eco-park

From page 12

climatic conditions do not permit growth of many species.

But the hilly areas in Chittagong, Chittagong Hill Tracts and Cox's Bazar are 'ideal areas' for growth of such species. These vast hilly areas were once rich in many of common species and rare medicinal plants.

The pressure of increasing population, urbanisation and industrialisation led to disappearance of many of these, the experts noted.

Forest Department sources said a five-year garden development project was undertaken in Doublemooring and Panchlaish thanas in Chittagong in 1994-95. But due to some problems in 'land management,' the project could not be implemented.

Hartal in Ctg

From page 12

president S M Nurul Huq and some other chamber leaders yesterday held a discussion with Jamaat leaders at the chamber house. The meeting ended inconclusively.

A source said Javed was trying to arrange a meeting between his father Akteruzzaman Babu and Jamaat leaders for withdrawal of 48-hour hartal.

Javed is trying to bring his father in limelight of Chittagong politics by organising the negotiation, the source added.

Babu, however, attended a reception in honour of him by his supporters at Muslim Hall in the city today.



A five-member delegation of senior lawyers of the Supreme Court called on President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed at his Bangabhaban office yesterday morning. --PID photo

Unruly protests at SC was a party programme

Members of Sammilito Ainjibi Samonnoy Parishad say

Lawyers of Sammilito Ainjibi Samonnoy Parishad termed Thursday's unruly protest at the Supreme Court contemptuous and a criminal offence and demanded punishment of those involved in it, reports UNB.

"Calling meetings, giving speeches and hurling slogans in the corridor of the court, kicking at the door of the Judges and keeping them under siege are severe attacks on the 200-year-old High Court-Supreme Court," said the resolution of the Parishad.

Reading out the resolutions at a press conference yesterday evening after a two-day conference of the council, Barrister Amir-ul-Islam said Thursday's protest at the Supreme Court was a party programme.

"The illegal programme was called for without consulting anybody of the bar," he quoted

from the resolutions of the conference held in the Supreme Court premises where lawyer-leaders from 63 districts took part.

Law Minister Abdul Matin Khasru addressed the concluding session attended by Barrister Syed Ishtiaque Ahmed, Barrister Amir-ul-Islam, Barrister Shawkat Ali Khan, Advocate Gaziul Haq, Advocate SS Halder and Barrister Shafiq Ahmed. Advocate Sahara Khatun was in the chair.

The conference adopted a nine-point resolution with an urge for all to keep the Chief Justice and other judges above all debates and controversies.

Condemning the party and the alliance that asked for continuing movement over appointments to the Appellate Division, the conference observed this kind of party programme is a

serious threat to creating an environment for independence of the judiciary.

The parishad also called for keeping all forums of the lawyers free from party politics.

"We are surprised to note newspaper reports that one political party had asked for ensuring the victory of the party in the election of the Bar Council," said Barrister Amir, the elected Vice President of the Council.

He quoted a number of delegates as saying that the attack on the Supreme Court is like the killing of speaker Shahed Ali inside the assembly, which was followed by martial law in the country.

He urged people to remain vigilant against all 'evil activities of the anti-democracy forces.'

Cheap method to remove arsenic

From page 12

arsenic-free water.

The arsenic containing particles remain in the bucket as those can not pass through the sand.

The whole process to get 20 litres of arsenic-free water takes less than 20 minutes.

The sand can be used several times if it is washed, preferably with bleaching power to decontaminate it from other microbes.

The initial cost is around Tk 2000, which includes the cost of buckets, tube and the iron mixture.

The technique is in the final stage of approval by The Technical Advisory Group (TAG) under the National Steering Committee on Arsenic.

"The user-friendly technique works very well not in laboratory but in rural homes and the yearly cost for filtering arsenic contaminated water is less than Tk 150 for a family of five," said Dr Meng, a Chinese born American.

Dr Meng said the technique is being used for about a year by 20 families in Gulmohar village, the area under the pilot project.

Water of over 90 per cent of tube wells in Kachua thana are contaminated with arsenic.

"We regularly monitored the water samples after filtration and also the health of family members. Health of members of the families using the method is improving from drinking arsenic-free water and surprisingly, there

Iraq accuses US of stirring trouble

BAGHDAD, Jan 13 : An Iraqi official accused Washington today of seeking to create a new problem and said the case of a US pilot missing since the 1991 Gulf War was closed more than five years ago.

US President Bill Clinton's revival of the case "has a political significance and aims to create problems and further complicate the situation," Nizar Hamdoun, Iraq's foreign ministry undersecretary and a former UN ambassador, told AFP.

Study on Padma barrage

From page 1

Indo-Bangla relationship.

Necessary steps would be taken after submission of the feasibility report in July, said Razzak. "We'll start the study of our own and hope to get assistance from the donor countries and agencies."

Razzak said reaching a permanent arrangement on sharing of the Teesta waters is very complicated because of the fact that there is also a barrage on the river on the Indian side. Therefore, he said, the interim arrangement to be made as soon as possible would continue until a scientific arrangement is made, as suggested by the experts committee earlier.

Razzak said India has also offered expertise and technical

assistance in fighting arsenic scare in Bangladesh.

He also said implementation of the Ganges Water-sharing Treaty also came up for discussion in the JRC meeting that decided for prompt action in case the flow of waters into Bangladesh come down below 60,000 cusec.

The local-level committees would be made active to monitor the flow of waters of the common rivers, he said referring to the outcome of the meeting.

Sethi told journalists that his country has agreed to support the feasibility study for the construction of the Padma barrage following a request from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Replying to a question, he said if needed, his country might

consider bilateral talks with Nepal on resolving problems concerning the common rivers.

Both ministers shared the view that the recent floods that hit areas across the borders were unprecedented and put the huge damage incurred by both countries to the absence of early warning.

They also said the discussions in the JRC meeting were very fruitful. There has been no point of disagreement during the two day meet, claimed the ministers.

Razzak informed newsmen that from now on the JRC would meet twice a year instead of once as the two countries often face problems pertaining to the 54 common rivers.

Ishurdi EPZ inaugurated

ISHURDI, Jan 13: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the country's fifth Export Processing Zone (EPZ) here today, reports UNB.

She urged the entrepreneurs to invest to avail excellent incentive packages, particularly on stake in the EPZs.

"Our government is determined to provide all supports for increasing investment and hopes that this EPZ will create a new horizon of creating employment and helping economic development in the region," she said.

The Ishurdi EPZ (IEPZ) being set up on 308.77 acres of land will offer 166 small and medium-scale industrial plots and is expected to create jobs for about 20,000 people.

The projected investment in the IEPZ, located 160-km off the Bangabandhu Bridge and 15-km from Paksey Bridge, is around 36.5 million US dollar while the targeted amount of exports is 57.60 million US dollar.

The Prime Minister said priority would be given to agro-processing, IT and software industries in the IEPZ.

She said in the last four and a half years the government had established two more EPZ in Comilla and Mongla, which would go for operation soon.

Kajol released on parole for 3 days

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Jan 13: Faruque Ahmed Kajol, chief of Kotchandpur Syndicate Bank was released on parole for three days with effect from Friday afternoon.

Three platoons of armed police and two hundred volunteers have been deployed to ensure his security.

He was released on parole as per demand of the leaders of survey committee who deposited money with the so-called Syndicate Bank.

Members of the Survey Committee still hope to get back their money from Kajol which he had taken by forged means.

Kajol was arrested on May 8 last year on charge of collecting several crores of taka from the people by forged means in the name of his Syndicate Bank.

Known as 'Hundi Shamrat', Kajol has been allowed by the district and police administration to use mobile and digital telephones during his brief stay in a house at Kotchandpur.

According to CID report, Kajol is not only an international gold smuggler, but also an arms trader.

He siphoned off several crores of taka out of the country through hundi, said an official of the CID.

Indian version of Viagra in the offing

NEW DELHI, Jan 13 : An Indian firm announced on yesterday it planned to launch a local version of the anti-impotence drug Viagra, saying the product had passed federal medical safety tests, reports AFP.

"We are launching the indigenously-produced Sildenafil Citrate under the brand name 'Erix' for which we have received permission," manufacturers Unichem Laboratories said in a statement.

The company did not specify a date for the medicine's launch in India's potentially-huge market but said the product would first hit the shelves in New Delhi, the national capital.

Industry analysts said Erix's unique feature was its low price tag, and added that at least two other local firms were in the race to put out a similar product.

Unichem's launch followed a string of newspaper articles about the drug's Indian clone, with many medical experts warning they would comment only after measuring the side-effects of the drug.

The firm said Erix would be available as oral tablets but only on prescription.

In prudish India, impotence is hardly discussed, but so-called 'sex-doctors' flourish in most cities, towns and villages.

Threat to push back 50,000 Chakmas

GUWAHATI, India, Jan 13: A powerful tribal group in India's north-eastern frontier state of Arunachal Pradesh today threatened to drive out 50,000 Buddhist refugees if New Delhi failed to deport them to Bangladesh, reports AFP.

The All Arunachal Pradesh Students' Union had staged protests, including a general strike in the state yesterday to pressure the state and the federal governments to oust the tribal Buddhist Chakma refugees.

"We shall be forced to chalk out fresh strategies to evict the refugees from Arunachal Pradesh if the government fails to come up with any solution by this month end," Goge Sora, AAPSU general secretary, told AFP.

"We can go to any extent to free the state of the refugees."

The Chakmas have been staying in Arunachal Pradesh since 1964 as stateless citizens after they fled their native Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh following alleged persecution by the country's majority Muslim community.

The government of Arunachal Pradesh, which borders China, wants to get rid of the Chakmas saying the presence of the refugees could turn out to be a potential threat to indigenous tribals.

"The presence of refugees in Arunachal Pradesh is indeed a matter of serious concern and there are also disturbing reports that some Chakma youths cross over to Bangladesh and then smuggle in arms for subversive

activities in the state," said Takam Sanjay, a provincial minister.

"It seems the Chakma refugees are arming themselves to fight the locals in case of any crackdown on them by the government," Neelam Taram, former home minister of Arunachal Pradesh and now in charge of information and public relations, said.

The Chakmas have been eking out a living by selling agricultural produce and running petty business in eastern Arunachal Pradesh.

"Where do we go from here. We don't have anything left in Bangladesh and if force is applied on us to leave Arunachal Pradesh we shall have to approach international human rights forums for intervention," a Chakma refugee leader said requesting anonymity.

"We shall prefer to die here than living elsewhere."

The Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Mukut Mithi said the federal home ministry had been told of the refugee problem and its adverse social implications.

"We want the Chakmas to be deported from Arunachal Pradesh. We don't have any problems if the refugees are settled outside our state and provided Indian citizenship," he said.

"But they have no place in our state although we don't want to take any hasty steps that could amount to violating human rights," the chief minister added.

Agitating lawyers

From page 1

Golam Rabbani and Justice Ruhul Amin -- elevated from the HC. This led to an unprecedented demonstration in the Supreme Court by pro-opposition lawyers on Thursday.

The statement said the President was this proposal should be given due consideration in order to resolve matters in accordance with the proposal agreed by all concerned."

After the meeting with the President, Ishtiaq told newsmen that they would also meet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with their proposal. No date was set for the meeting till last night.

Law Minister Abdul Matin Khasru told BBC yesterday evening that he would take the proposal to the Prime Minister. But he did not mention anything about the team's proposed meeting with the PM.

Ishtiaq also had a meeting with the Law Minister at the Bar Council office later in the afternoon. The minister was briefed by the pro-government lawyers on the meeting they had with their opponents at Ishtiaq's chamber to resolve the matter.

But the outcome of the meeting between Ishtiaq and the law minister could not be known.

Ishtiaq's statement was read out to newsmen by Barrister Mainul Hossain, President of Supreme Court Bar Association, following a meeting of leaders of the two rival groups of lawyers.

The two sides agreed to the formula.

Sources close to the five senior lawyers said names of the two HC judges who were superceded were in the list of four judges for elevation to the SC. But the President appointed two of them on advice of the government.

The sources also said the President told the five lawyers that the proposal should be given due consideration but he has constitutional limitations as he acts on the recommendation of the Prime Minister.

The proposal that the delega-

tion took to the Chief Justice on Friday and to the President yesterday was unanimously approved on January 12 by representatives of the rival groups.

The delegation included Dr Kamal Hossain, Mainul Hossain, Abdul Malek and Dr Mzahir. Barrister Nazmul Huda, on behalf of the agitating lawyers told reporters yesterday afternoon that they were hopeful about a solution of the problem.

Later, in a press release, the Sarbadaliya Ainjibi Oikkya Parishad said it had a meeting at Nazmul Huda's chamber in the evening. The Parishad welcomed the initiative taken by the five lawyers.

Japanese business team in city

A high level business delegation arrived in the capital from Tokyo yesterday to explore new areas of future Japanese investment in Bangladesh, giving special thrust on the prospect of having an EPZ of their own, reports UNB.

Senior executives of Board of Investment (BOI) and Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) received the members of the Japanese private-sector appraisal mission at the Zia International Airport at noon.

During their three-day stay in Bangladesh, the team will call on the Prime Minister and meet the Finance Minister today.

The delegation "Observation Mission on Investment Environment to Bangladesh" from the Japan-Bangladesh Committee for Commercial and Economic Cooperation (JBCEC) will visit the Dhaka and Chittagong EPZs tomorrow.

Kashmiris dismiss Indian army chief's remarks

MUZAFFARABAD, Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, Jan 13 : An alliance of separatist groups today scoffed at Indian Army Chief General S. Padmanabhan's remarks that Kashmiri militants were sick of fighting, reports AFP.

"The ground situation in Kashmir belies this false claim," Muthahidda Jihad Council (MJC) chairman Syed Salahuddin said in a statement.

Salahuddin also heads the Hizbul Mujahideen, the most powerful of guerrilla outfits fighting to end Indian rule in the divided Himalayan state, over which Pakistan and India have fought two wars since their independence in 1947.

He said Padmanabhan's remarks were a 'vain attempt to boost the sagging morale of his physically and mentally exhausted troops.'

"In a chain of incidents Indian troopers have shot and killed each other in frustration," he said, citing the latest in Srinagar, Indian Kashmir, earlier this week when two soldiers killed five of their colleagues.

Salahuddin said an early settlement of the 53-year old Kashmir tangle was in India's own interest.

"The morale of the Mujahideen is high. India can test their passion for martyrdom. God willing they will lead the ongoing struggle to its logical end."

Padmanabhan said Friday militancy had waned in Kashmir and that he favoured the extension of a current unilateral government ceasefire there.

The Indian army, following instructions from Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, suspended operations against militant groups in Kashmir on November 27 for the holy Islamic month of Ramadan.

No agency

From page 12

ching vital wetlands, parks, open spaces and playgrounds in the country. The officials of the same ministry echoed the minister's words. Mosharraf, however, said that in the metropolitan city Rajuk and similar other agencies should implement the law, while the chairman's office should do the job in the municipalities.

Asked if Rajuk could be burdened with another responsibility while it was already short of manpower, Mosharraf replied he would try to open a separate cell to implement the law.

Rizwana Hasan of the Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association said it should be the responsibility of all departments concerned to protect the law. She said that if the Master Plan designates an open space, it should be the responsibility of the owner to defend it. She also stressed the need for awareness campaign in this regard.