

The Daily Star

3rd Millennium

3 more tribunals for disposal of cases under PSA

By Court Correspondent

Three more tribunals were constituted in Dhaka on Sunday for quick disposal of cases under the Public Safety Act (PSA), court sources said.

The judges of the tribunals are Sunil Pal, Ashraful Haq and AKM Salauddin.

Earlier on March 28 last year, a tribunal was set up in the capital for trial of cases under the Act. But the lone tribunal could not cope with the large number of cases, resulting in a huge backlog.

A total of 476 cases were registered with the tribunal in nine months till November last year. Of these, 40 were disposed of and 436 are pending.

The PSA was enacted on February 15 last year to curb incidents of extortion, kidnapping, snatching, damaging public property, obstructing traffic movement and damaging vehicles, manipulating tender and such other crimes.

Movement for protection of Lalon's shrine intensified

By DU Correspondent

The Committee for Protection of Lalon's Shrine (CPLS) has started forming its units in different parts of the country to intensify the movement for protection of the shrine in Kushtia.

CPLS sources said the movement has already spread in several districts including Faridpur, Kushtia and Gopalganj. Lalon followers (bauls), his admirers

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Experts see link between blasts

The bombs were made of same ingredients, likely from same source

Star Report

yesterday.

The government investigation committee, formed by the Ministry of Home Affairs, formally started working yesterday. The home ministry sent a letter to the CPB asking it to co-operate with the committee, headed by Additional Secretary of Home Affairs Afkar Uddin.

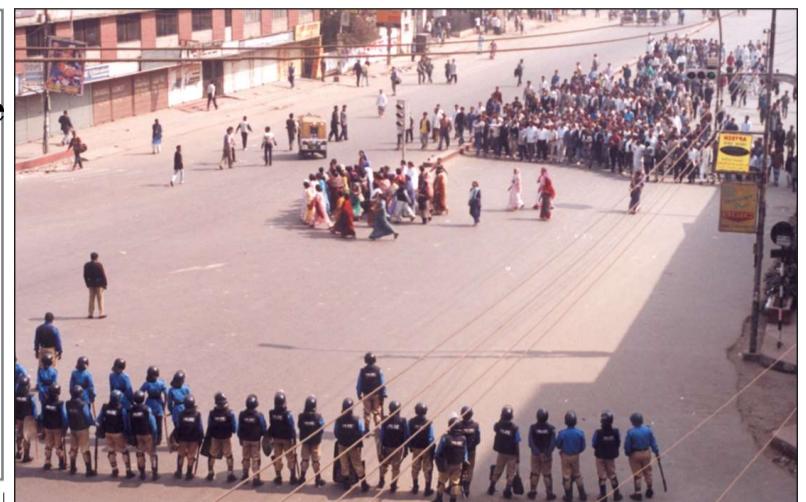
The committee has visited the spots and talked to witnesses, Afkar Uddin told The Daily Star yesterday. It would take statements from the injured victims at DMCH today.

At the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), Mashir told The Daily Star yesterday that he was attending the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) rally when a man, who was sitting by his side, asked him to keep a shopping bag for him. The stranger told him that he would come back soon and left.

"I did not know what was in the bag and I thought he would be back soon," the 28-year-old Mashir, who was injured in Saturday's second explosion, said.

Meanwhile, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) continued its investigation but could not pinpoint the actual culprits till

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Riot police keep a close watch on a BNP procession approaching Kakrail crossing in the city at noon yesterday during hartal hours. The dawn-to-dusk shutdown passed off without any major incident. — Star photo

Democracy only means to end conflict, ensure dev'

AAPP chairmanship handed over to Cambodia



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina delivers her speech as President of the Association of Asian Parliaments for Peace (AAPP) at the opening ceremony of the association's conference in the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh yesterday. — AFP photo

PHNOM PENH, Jan 22: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today said practice of democracy is the only means of ending violence and conflict to ensure peace and development in any country, reports UNB.

"If we truly believe in peace, we must uphold democracy at all cost," she said at the inauguration of the conference of Asian Association of Parliaments for Peace.

Cambodian King Norodom Sihanouk formally inaugurated the 2nd conference of the AAPP with a hope that the association will be most successful in its work for democracy, peace, development and cooperation.

As the meet began at Chatumukh Conference Hall, the Bangladesh Prime Minister handed over the chairmanship of AAPP to Cambodia.

In her address to the inaugural function Sheikh Hasina suggested that peace could be achieved by alleviating poverty and improving quality of life for each and every citizen.

The Prime Minister said acts of violence cannot stop the victory of the people as she said "violence is bound to fail, everywhere and every time."

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11-party to bring out mourning processions today

By Staff Correspondent

The left-leaning 11-party alliance will bring out 'mourning processions' in different parts of the country today protesting the killing of four persons at a rally of the Communist Party of Bangladesh in the city on Saturday.

The procession in the city will be brought out from the Central Shaheed Minar at 3pm.

Six organizations will also hold a joint rally at Muktagan in the city at 3 pm today protesting the killings.

These are Bangladesh Krishak Federation, Bangladesh Kishani Shava, Bangladesh Adibashi Samiti, Bhashanam Sramik Union, Bhashanam Nari Sramik Union and Gramene Buddhibhumi Front.

Meanwhile, more organizations issued statements yesterday condemning the killings and demanded arrest and punishment of the persons responsible.

These include Sammitito Mukti Joddha Front, Projomner Chetana and Bangladesh Tannery Workers-Employees Federation.

Four persons were killed and about 50 injured in a powerful bomb explosion at the rally held at Paltan Maidan.

Refrain from making comment until investigation is over

CPB urges ruling, opposition parties

By Staff Correspondent

Leaders of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) have held the government 'primarily responsible' for the bomb explosion at its Paltan Maidan grand rally on Saturday, as police failed to ensure proper security at the meeting venue.

"The government failed to ensure security for those who attended the grand rally despite having the tough Public Safety Act," CPB President Manzurul Ahsan Khan told a press conference at the party's central office yesterday.

Saturday's blast killed four CPB activists and injured at least 50.

Khan termed the existing law and order situation very alarming.

"On an average eight people get killed everyday," he quoted press reports.

CPB General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim announced a week-long mourning programme, which begins

today (Tuesday), in protest at the killings and in demand for immediate arrest of the culprits.

The programme includes a mourning procession following a rally at the Central Shaheed Minar today, a black day on January 26 and a nationwide demonstration on January 29.

Selim also urged all to make the dawn-to-dusk hartal on February 1, called by the 11-party alliance, a success.

The CPB leader also requested political leaders of both ruling and opposition parties to refrain from finger-pointing or making any comment on the Paltan explosion, until the investigation is over.

"We do not officially blame anybody for the explosion. No sooner had the incident taken place than some people started blaming the fundamentalists and some others the government for

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Peaceful hartal paralyses normal life

By Staff Correspondent

The opposition-sponsored countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal called to press for resignation of the Awami League government and repeal of the Public Safety Act passed off peacefully yesterday, but paralysed civic life and economic activities. No major incident was reported from anywhere in the country.

The BNP-led opposition alliance called the hartal also demanding dissolution of seventh Jatiya Sangsad and early elections.

Most of the business establishments, markets, shops, offices and educational institutions in the city were closed during the 12-hour shutdown, starting from six in the morning.

Movement of rickshaws was almost normal while a few motor vehicles, including the state-run BRTC buses, minibuses, taxis and tempos also plied on some specific routes and the VIP roads. Inter-district buses were off the road.

All international and domestic flights were on schedule. Trading in the Dhaka and Chittagong

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US-Bangla study on gas resources at final stage

Low-key blocks may prove high on potential

By Sharier Khan

The US-Bangladesh gas resource study, which has finally reached its final stage, might reveal astonishing gas potentials in some of the blocks earlier considered not viable, sources involved in the study said.

Both the United States and Bangladesh have attached great importance to the study for the reason that it would help the latter make decisions on gas

sector development in general and gas export in particular.

However, following delay in completion of the study last year, the study is now proceeding very slowly, as the government has decided not to take any new decision till the next elections, said a well-placed source in Petrobangla. The gas study will become very important afterwards, he added.

The United States Geological Survey (USGS) and Petrobangla is jointly conducting the survey under the US-Bangladesh energy co-operation arrangement to assess of Bangladesh's gas resources.

A government team of experts comprising mostly Petrobangla officials has recently left for USA to participate in the final assessment of the report. The team returns home on February 8. The report was originally scheduled

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for completion in October last year. It was delayed for different reasons.

According to data gathered by the USGS team over the last one year, there is a high prospect of finding huge gas reserves in two most unlikely blocks - 8 and 11, said a participant in the study. He however did not elaborate.

The USGS obtained geological and seismic data from independent oil companies (IOCs) including US company Unocal and European company Shell Oil. However, the USGS accepted the IOC data only after Petrobangla had vetted it, sources pointed out.

Both Unocal and Shell had been publicising that Bangladesh had a gas reserve of 30 tcf to 50 tcf. But when Petrobangla, which

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At the meeting, the sub-committee expressed its utter disappointment at the inadequate safety measures in garment factories.

Of the five factories visited by members of the sub-committee in the last one month, only two had adequate safety-exit system, the meeting was told.

The meeting agreed that there should be at least 350 square feet space for each worker in every factory. The five factories they visited had space as low as 114

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Garments factory owners will have to pay penalty to workers for each day if they fail to pay wages after the 15th of the following month.

This was decided at a meeting of the Parliamentary Sub-committee on Garments Industry and representatives of BGMEA and garment workers, held at the Sangsad Bhaban last night.

The penalty will be paid at the rate of one per cent of the basic wage.

Factory owners will have to give appointment letter to each worker, and the probationary period will not exceed six months.

The meeting also decided that provident fund, gratuity and festival bonus for workers would be mandatory, meeting sources told The Daily Star.

The three-member Parliamentary Sub-committee was formed recently with ruling party law-

maker Shahjahan Khan as its convener.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour and Employment Ministry formed the sub-committee in view of "deprivation" of workers and deaths from recurring fire incidents in factories due to poor safety measures.

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