

Bangabandhu Murder Case

Expeditious trial demanded

UNB, Dhaka

Government leaders and ministers in Parliament yesterday deman-ded expeditious trial of the Bangabandhu murder case for the sake of strengthening democracy and rule of law in the country.

Participating in the thanksgiving motion on the President's new year speech, some of them were critical of the role of judiciary saying that the "entire nation was anxiously awaiting delivery of justice."

Prime Minister's Parliamentary Affairs Advisor Suranjit Sengupta said judiciary is part of democracy. "As the legislature is part of democracy, judiciary is also accountable to the people," he added.

He criticised the delay in the trial process and said: "The judiciary has no right to delay justice."

The lawyer cum legislature termed the delay and "embarrassment" of the court in hearing the Bangabandhu murder case "a mockery of justice". This, he said, was only possible for lack of a supreme judicial council.

He warned that the iron curtain of "contempt of court" would not stop the people from seeking justice.

Referring to the filing of case against the Public Safety Act, Sengupta pointed out that those senior lawyers did not speak or wage movement when the Anti-Terrorism Act was passed.

He disapproved of the appearance of the senior lawyers of behalf of industrialist M Morshed Khan "because the later had wealth and muscle power." He said Awami League does not act for influential people, rather it always works for

the commonman.

Shipping Minister A S M Abdur Rab also demanded quick disposal of the Bangabandhu murder case.

Rab, a JSD leader, also demanded trial of the killing of four national leaders inside the Dhaka Central Jail, of General Manzur, Colonel Taher and others, which, he said, the Prime Minister also demanded.

Referring to the absence of opposition from the House, he said democracy can't be effective without participation of all.

"We have to stay in the House and speak for the people. Absence of the elected members means showing disrespect to the verdict of the people," the Shipping Minister said.

"People are not concerned about who goes to power and who sits in the opposition. They want their representation for which they had voted," he added.

Rab warned that the opposition has to answer to the country's womenfolk because the parliament could not pass the bill relating to the extension of tenure of the reserved women seats that will expire early next month.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad in his deliberation accused the opposition BNP of joining hands with anti-liberation and autocratic forces.

Referring to the movement of the opposition, he said the present government would declare elections and form the caretaker administration in due time.

Thanking President Shahabuddin Ahmed for his new year's speech in parliament and

highlighting the achievements of the government, Education Minister A S H K Sadique said the country has marched ahead towards self-reliance under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina.

He mentioned the progress made in various sectors, particularly in education, health and infrastructural development.

State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed said the Awami League has always worked for the socio-economic emancipation of the people.

Referring to BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia's "threat of a mass upsurge," he said it is only Sheikh Hasina who can initiate a mass upsurge.

Prof Abu Sayeed gave a brief description of what he called the luxurious lifestyle of Begum Zia.

Sheikh Hasina has time and again proved to be a leader of the commonman, he said.

Jatiya Party MP Advocate Fazle Rabbi lauded the dynamic leadership of Sheikh Hasina and said the country marked remarkable progress in all sectors, including infrastructure, during the last four-and-a-half-year.

On the issue of the delay in the judgement of Bangabandhu murder case, he reminded the proverb, "justice delayed is justice denied" and demanded speedy progress of the trial for the sake of democracy.

Altaf Hossain Golondaz and Eakhi Rakhain also took part in the discussion on the President's speech.

ALPP meets today

A meeting of the Awami League Parliamentary Party (ALPP) will be held at 9 am today at the party's conference room in the Sangsad Bhaban, reports UNB.

Listing PLCs

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Latifur Rahman told the meeting. He said it is also not clear whether such offerings will come under the IPO guidelines.

"If not, the move will involve companies to list their securities and commence trading without going through the SEC and complying with IPO guidelines. The requirement will, thus, lead to conflicting systems of listing and IPO procedures which can be vulnerable and misused by unscrupulous market players and dishonest SEC personnel," Rahman said.

"In other words, there will be trading of stock without requisite disclosures and transparency as required under IPO. In all likelihood, it will damage the capital market.

"We strongly feel that the listing should be optional and if any company decides to list itself, then its offering should go through IPO formalities.

"For this, the existing guidelines on premium on IPO offerings need to be clearly laid down," Rahman said.

President

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means closing the possibility of economic progress," he said. President Shahabuddin praised the role of Bangladesh's police in UN peacekeeping missions, who brightened the image of the country abroad.

Dispatching female police officials for the first time to work with the UN mission is a matter that merits special mention, he said adding that steps should be taken to send more women police for UN missions.

Five female police officials were sent for the UN in East Timor. At present, 196 police officials are working in four UN missions in the three continents of the world.

The President also appreciated the establishment of Police Staff College and also women police investigation centre in the capital to serve the repressed and helpless women.

Home Minister Mohammad Nasim, Home Secretary MM Reza, Secretary to the President Mohammad Ismail Hossain and Inspector General of Police M Nurul Huda were present during the meeting.

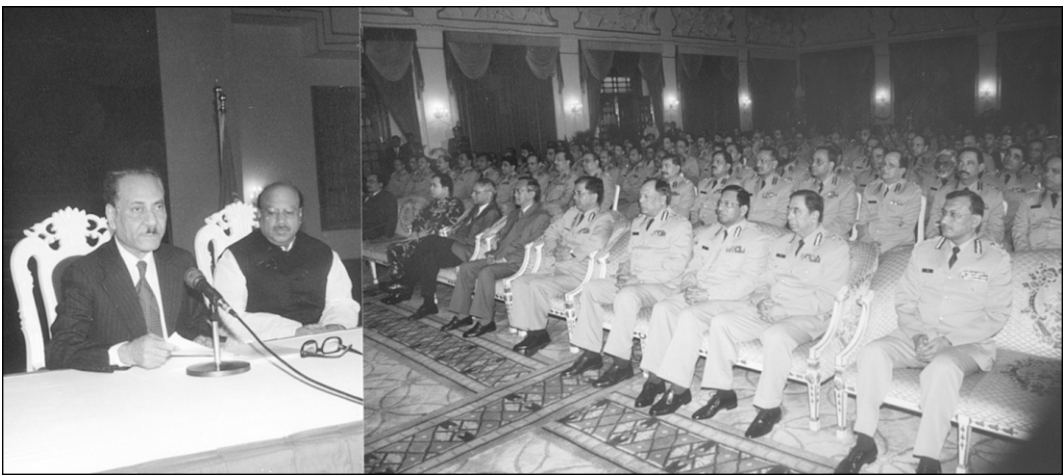


PHOTO: PID

President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed addressing a meeting of the high officials of police department at Bangabhaban yesterday.

Showcause on 11 Shahjalal Varsity students

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Shahjalal University authorities have issued show cause notices on 11 students for ransacking office rooms at the administrative building and confining the vice-chancellor and other officials of the university on January 23 and 24.

Secretary of the Disciplinary Committee issued the notices yesterday asking the 11 to explain within seven days why disciplinary action would not be taken against them.

On January 26, the university authorities field a case against seven students on charge of assaulting some teachers and confining the members of the academic council at the administrative building.

A commotion has been created among the students due to filing of the case and issuance of showcause notices.

Akimul murder: Judgement today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Judgement in Akimul murder case will be delivered today by M Hasan Imam, Additional District and Sessions Judge who is in charge of the special Court for trying all cases against top terrorist Ershad Shikdar and all his accomplices.

Akimul, an operator of Lockpur Fish Processing Company Ltd was chopped to death by Shikdar him-self at the Skidghat on February 25, 1998 for having sex with Khodeja Begum.

Khodeja is the first among four wives of Shikdar who has already been sentenced to death in six murder cases.

The body of Akimul was dumped into the river Bhairab along fish landing ghat soon after the murder.

The cases was revived on September 28, 1999 according to confessional statement under 164 by Ershad's chief body guard Noor-e-Alam.

Two out of eight accused in this murder case are still at large. They are Khodeja Begum and Jainal Khan.

Former BNP MP assaulted by partymen in Chittagong

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A former BNP MP from Rangunia was assaulted by his rivals in Chawkbazar area in the city Monday night, police and party sources said.

A group of rival BNP activists attacked Nurul Alam at Chawkbazar at 9 pm when a motorcade of Salauddin Kader Chowdhury, MP, was returning from Rangunia.

Party insiders blamed the supporters of Salauddin Kader Chowdhury for assaulting Alam.

Salauddin Kader Chowdhury, accompanied by his supporters was returning from Rangunia after holding a meeting there, party sources said.

However, Nurul Alam filed a case with Kotwali thana accusing some unidentified persons for the attack.

Booksellers compel students

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Group -- Pustaka, Shuktara and Free Press -- were awarded the job of printing and distributing over eight crore board textbooks for the country's 2.5 crore students.

"Beximco has so far distributed just over 6.5 lakh books of secondary level. The Beximco trio did not ask for the sell order from the NCTB," the sources in printing and publication industry said.

There was no book at wholesale Banglabazaar as the Beximco concerns distributed only a few books through their pre-enlisted dealers, which are all too inadequate for the demand.

"We could not collect books due to scarcity of books in the wholesale market," said one bookseller of New Market.

When contacted DMP Commissioner Motiur Rahman declined to talk, saying that he was too tied up to talk to the press.

Students have started attending new classes in new academic sessions without books as the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) has failed to provide books to the secondary students

Previously, textbooks were widely sold on the open market and this was the first time in the history

that only a few dealers were exclusively nominated by Beximco Group, he added.

Booksellers of the city and elsewhere in the country thronged the wholesale markets for books but most of them had to return empty-handed.

Retail booksellers of different areas also advised guardians and students to contact after mid-February because they were unable to collect books.

"We could not collect books due to scarcity of books in the wholesale market," said one bookseller of New Market.

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Students have started attending new classes in new academic sessions without books as the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) has failed to provide books to the secondary students due to awarding the printing job to inexperienced printers.

"It is an irreparable loss to the

nation as we would not be able to compensate for the loss," one guardian said.

The NCTB authorities had earlier said the process of sending books to different districts was on.

"We hope more than 50 per cent books of secondary level would reach students by the end of January," said NCTB Chairman Dr Tapan Kanti Chowdhury.

The NCTB must have to shoulder the responsibility to put an end to the miseries of students and their parents, another leader of Bangladesh Mudran Shilpa Samity said.

The prices of textbooks would climb, as it is now obvious that the Beximco concerns would not be able to complete the distribution process before the first week of February, he said.

The NCTB went ahead with its plan of awarding printing and distribution right of 8.12 crore textbooks to a sole publisher, despite being repeatedly cautioned by the leaders of the printing and publication industry, he alleged.

The Daily Star celebrates 10th year

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pledged that it would continue its efforts to establish people's right to know.

"Information is a right, not a privilege in a democratic society," he said.

Terming the readers as the main source of strength of the paper, he expressed his commitment that it would always keep their interest above everything.

Azimur Rahman, chairman, board of directors, Mediaworld Limited, appreciated the dedication and efforts made by the daily's staff members to establish truth, which is the best friend of the newsmen.

Other members of the board including Latifur Rahman, Shamsur Rahman and Rouf Chowdhury were also present.

Speaking on the occasion renowned columnist from India Kuldeep Nayar hoped that democracy would take deep root in this subcontinent where it would also be established that people have a right to know.

Nayar said that the people as

well as journalists would have to sacrifice a lot to establish democracy. Journalists will have to struggle to establish people's right of knowledge because every ruler will try to prevent them from getting information, he commented.

Nancy Wong Ali, wife of late SM Ali, came all the way Australia to participate in the celebrations at the invitation of The Daily Star.

Renowned personalities who attended the function include Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, Finance Minister SAMS Kibria, Agriculture Minister Begum Matia Chowdhury, Law Minister Abdul Matin Khasru, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, State Minister for Sports and Culture Obaidul Quader, State Minister for LGRD Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Chief Whip of the Opposition Khandker Delwar Hossain, former finance minister M Saifur Rahman MP, M Morshed Khan MP, Sadek Hossain Khoka MP, Barister Moudud Ahmedv, Barister Nazmul Huda MP, Rashed Khan Menon, Mujahidul Islam

Selim, Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen Harunur Rashid, DG BILISS Maj Gen Jamil D Ahsan, former foreign secretary Farouq Sobhan, former secretary Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury, World Bank country representative Fedrick T Temple, Chairman of the Centre for Policy Dialogue and renowned economist Rehman Sobhan, economist Devapriya Bhattacharia, Atiur Rahman, Barrister Ishtiaq Ahmed, Dhaka Chamber President Benajir Ahmed, Dhaka stock exchange chairman Shahiq Khan, Khushi Kabir of ADAB, actor Alamgir and singer Runa Laila.

Among the editors present were Bazlur Rahman of the Sangbad, Golam Sarwar of the Jugantar, Atikullah Khan Masud of the Janakantha, Motiur Rahman Chowdhury of the Manabjamine, Motiur Rahman of the Prothom Alo, and Chief Editor and Editor of the Financial Express Moazzem Hossain and Reazuddin Ahmed respectively.

Press reports anger JS Panel chairman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT F

Angered by press reports on his action in the Jatiya Sangsad on Sunday, Panel Chairman Abdul Latif Siddiqui yesterday advised journalists to focus their attention to the absentee opposition lawmakers in stead of taunting the Chair.

Referring to the opposition boycott of the parliament, the member of the five-strong panel of chairmen suggested that the journalists should rather worry about those who are acting against rules. "Why don't you criticise those elected public representatives who are neglecting their sacred duties in the House and are conspiring to make the parliament as well as the government ineffective through unconstitutional means?"

On Sunday, Siddiqui allowed Education Minister ASHK Sadique to speak on a motion of thanks overruling Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid's decision who had already closed the topic for discussion.

In a bid to justify his decision on Sunday, the panel chairman reiterated that his move was to correct a mistake through which the relevant minister was dropped from the list of discussants who thanked the prime minister for adopting the National Education Policy.

He also wondered why the newspapers did not report on the lapse that deprived the very archi-

tect of the crucial education policy.

Siddiqui then referred to Rule 315 of the Rules of Procedure of parliament that reads: "Whenever any inconsistency or difficulty arises in the application of these rules any member may, with the consent of the Speaker, move that any rule may be suspended in its application to a particular motion before the House, and if the motion is carried the rule in question shall stand suspended."

He also mentioned about Kaul that he said permits such corrective move.

The national dailies published reports on Sunday's unusual practice by the Chair referring to Rule 294 that states: "A member shall not speak on a question after the Speaker has collected the voices both of the Ayes and of the Noes on that question."

Home Ministry

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rallies so that in case of such incidents, the victims can be identified. Political parties must keep volunteers and first aid facilities.

The probe body during its investigation interviewed leftist leaders, witnesses, victims and officials from police, DGFI, NSI and SB.

Till yesterday, the CID could not make any headway in detecting the culprits responsible for the bomb explosions.

Red-tapism thwarts

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International BV, the only computer manufacturer in that country, as the project implementation agency. An inter-ministerial meeting approved the 'price offer' and the 'commercial contract' with the Dutch company.

But the education ministry at a meeting of the Cabinet Purchase Committee on December 20 last raised several questions in this regard and the meeting termed the offer "unsolicited". The committee then asked the Dutch authorities to float a tender in the Netherlands and make a fresh offer for computer procurement, some sources said.

The Dutch Ambassador in Dhaka then sent a letter to the ERD Secretary saying, "The grant com-

ponent of ORET/MILIEV applications is provided from Dutch public funds. To ensure that these funds are not misused there are measures to prevent corruption and unfair practices."

The ERD in a letter to the education ministry on January 1 requested it to take a decision for procurement under the ORET regulations.

Officials of the Dutch Embassy at a meeting with ERD officials recently said the proposal was not unsolicited as stated by the Purchase Committee and that Tulip is the only Dutch manufacturer. "So there should be no question regarding the transparency of the Netherlands funds," the meeting was told.

DCC's mockery

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quito menace.

Frantic efforts for protection from mosquito begin with the sunset. There is no let-up even during daytime in some areas, they said.

But DCC men are seldom seen, many of them alleged.

When contacted, a senior official concerned in DCC claimed that their men have already destroyed about 80 per cent of mosquito larvae. Only some 'hidden sources' of larvae coupled with flying mosquitoes have caused the menace now, he said.

Six hundred DCC men equipped with 400 fogger machines and 600 hand sprays are engaged in controlling mosquito in the city, he said.

Many residents said stagnant water in surface drains is an ideal breeding ground for mosquitoes. Experts also said the problem could be solved by nearly 30 percent only by keeping the surface drains clean through flow of water.

DCC grants Tk 50 lakh a year to

each ward commissioner for development work, conservancy and cleaning surface drains. But most of the surface drains have turned into canals of dirty stagnant water.

Moreover, each ward commissioner has under him 35 sweepers who are paid by DCC.

When asked about the increasing mosquito menace, DCC's Chief Health Officer Dr Mohammad Ashraf Uddin said, "I can not say that we have entirely controlled mosquito. But we have been able to control it to a large extent".

"Mosquito invasion may be more in a few areas, but the situation is at a tolerable level in the city", he claimed.

In the budget for 2000-2001 financial year, DCC allocated Tk 13 crore only for mosquito control. The budget was increased following the sudden out break of dengue and it will be revised again, DCC sources said.

PM urges political parties

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the killers of Bangabandhu and shelter provided to the killers by the previous regimes virtually encouraged the assassins.

Besides, individual interest and question of domination in some areas sometimes led to the use of illegal arms, she said, adding that a few political parties, which do not have any faith in democracy, use illegal arms to serve their political purposes.

The Prime Minister said her government took some specific steps to ensure rule of law by holding trial of Bangabandhu's killers and to discourage the use of illegal arms.

"Since use of illegal arms is an impediment to the rule of law, we are determined to stamp out illegal use of arms from society," she told Parliament.

She said it is the usual responsibility of the government to recover arms, dig out its sources and bring

the culprits to book. The law enforcers are alert about it.

"We believe, it is possible to control the use of illegal arms if the people voluntarily extend help to the government and the law-enforcing agencies," Hasina said. "This problem could be tackled had there been cooperation from political parties."

She said the government has undertaken some specific steps to maintain law and order, to recover illegal arms and its import.

The Prime Minister informed the House that some 22,077 firearms, 67,710 bullets and 168,410 explosives were so far recovered since Awami League assumed power in 1996.

The government declared general amnesty to allow misguided terrorists of southwestern region to return to normal life. As a result 2,755 terrorists had surrendered while 2,073 arms were deposited, she said.

patronising terrorism."

Turning on CHT peace agreement, Khaleda said rights of Bengalee people had been violated.

She told the rally that when Awami League first came to power in the post-liberation period, it gave birth to Shanti Bahini, "they (AL) are now hoodwinking the countrymen in the name of peace deal."

She said the ruling party is plundering state wealth in the name of development and purchases as well as smuggling out money abroad. "Terrorism, killing, rape have increased manifold," she said.

BNP leaders Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Oil Ahmed, Abdullah Al Noman, Salahuddin Kader Chowdhury, Giasuddin Kader Chowdhury and Barkatulla Bulu and Shafiu Alam Prodan of Jagga also addressed the meeting.

Quake toll may hit 100000

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with 16,557 others injured. With many bodies still caught in the ruins of homes and buildings, predictions of the ultimate death toll have varied widely.

In the highest estimate from an Indian official, Defense Minister George Fernandes said Tuesday that the death toll could go as high as 100,000, citing the high populations of the two main cities destroyed: Bhuj, with 150,000 inhabitants, and Anjar, with 80,000 people.

"This is my personal assessment," Fernandes told The Associated Press, acknowledging the difficulty of making accurate assessments. "I have been to those areas and I have seen it myself."

The Gujarat state government yesterday had a more conservative estimate. Home Minister Haren

Pandya, reacting to Fernandes's estimate, emphasized it was the defense minister's "personal assessment."

"I don't want to dispute that figure," Pandya said. "According to our assessment, it could be between 15,000 to 20,000."

Damage was estimated at up to dils 5.5 billion. Six aftershocks with magnitudes ranging from 3.3 to 4.5 rocked the Bhuj area through the night until Tuesday morning, the Indian Meteorological Department said. There were no reports of new damage of casualties.

Rescue workers kept up the grim task of digging into the stony debris of ruined buildings in what they said was an increasingly futile search for survivors. But not without success: 16-year-old Ketan Rathod may very

well be the last person pulled from the wreckage alive in Anjar.

He was caught in a small space with his dead grandmother for 96 hours before he was dug out of 2 meters of concrete.

"I was shouting for help or sleeping for most of the time," said Ketan, who could only move a few inches while caught between two pillars at his house. "I was also crying for my grandmother and worried about my parents."

He was found only after the army had brought in a crane to start removing heavy slabs of concrete. A soldier heard his cries for help and he was removed from the rubble at about 10 am.

"When I heard the people digging for me, I started crying," Ketan said. He was dehydrated, but otherwise

suffered no serious injuries.

His family had given up hope until the soldiers started shouting that someone was alive.

"I thought they were all dead," said Ketan's mother, Naina Narbheram, who was at a friend's house when the earthquake hit.

Aid workers said they expected Ketan to be among the last survivors as they passed Tuesday afternoon the critical 100-hour mark since the quake struck.

"We talk about a limit of 100 hours, when after that the chances of finding someone alive drop dramatically," said Jochen Jakowski, the leader of a German rescue team in Anjar. "It is close to a world record if we find someone after 100 hours."