



Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia met families of victims of last Tuesday's hartal at the Brahmanbaria Circuit House yesterday.

PM asks partymen in Comilla Work together with ulema, keep vigil on troublemakers

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged her partymen and people, including ulema, to keep vigil on troublemakers to foil their subversive act in the country.

"Work together with local people and ulema to maintain law and order and peace. Remain alert against any act of indiscipline and terrorism," she said while inaugurating a 10,000-line digital telephone exchange in Comilla district.

Hasina said Islam is a religion of peace and all should get united so that none can disturb peace and break discipline.

This is the 35th district headquarters to be connected with digital telephone network under the 2,16,000 Digital Telephone Project for District Headquarters financed by the Chinese government. Comilla will be the first where the digital exchange of the highest number of 10,000 phone lines was installed yesterday.

The prime minister from Ganobhaban talked to Telecommunications and Home Minister Mohammad Nasim in opening the exchange. Law Minister Abdul Matin Khasru, Whip Majibul Huq, Joyal Abedin MP, Public Administration Reforms Commission Chairman A T M Shamsul Huq and T&T Board Chairman H K M Faruq were present in Comilla on the occasion.

Following the installation of the

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Police escort Nigerian national Goddya Ochendo out after the High Court Division Bench hearing yesterday.

Nigerian HC seeks 10 days to take Goddya back home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nigerian High Commission in Dhaka yesterday prayed before a High Court Division Bench for allowing 10 days to take back home its national Goddya Ochendo, who has been languishing in the jail for the last five years despite end of his term.

Following a suo moto rule issued by the HC Division Bench comprising of Justice Abu Sayeed and Justice Khademul Islam Chowdhury on February 5, a representative of the Nigerian High Commission appeared before the court yesterday and assured of taking all measures for sending Goddya back home.

The suo moto was issued following a report published in The Daily Star, which said that the 19-year-old Nigerian boy was arrested in connection with drug smuggling by US teenage girl Eleda MacCord in 1992. He was acquitted of the charge in July, 1993.

Again on July 13 the same year, he had to serve two months imprisonment on the charge of entering Bangladesh with an invalid passport. But he could not come out of the jail due to legal complications in the last five years.

As Goddya was produced before the HC bench yesterday, the Attorney General Mahmudul Islam argued that this bench cannot be entitled to issue suo moto rule in this case under the clause 102 of the constitution.

At this stage, Advocate Nizamul Haq Nasim of the Ain-O-Salish Kendra (ASK) expressed his willingness to speak on the issue as an intervenor. The court asked him to submit petition appealing to become an intervenor.

Subsequently, Nasim submitted a petition. Hearing on the issue will take place today, the court decided.

Epicentre in Bangladesh? Quake jolts Assam, Meghalaya

AFP, Guwahati

An earthquake of moderate intensity rattled northeastern India yesterday but there were no reports of damage or loss of life, officials in the Assam state capital of Guwahati said.

The tremor measuring 4.2 on the Richter scale rocked several cities including Guwahati and Shillong at 6.50 am (0050 GMT), India's seismological centre said.

Panic gripped the people in the states of Meghalaya and Assam as the jolts lasted 30 seconds.

India is still dealing with the aftermath of the January 26 earthquake in the western Indian state of Gujarat that left more than 30,000 people dead.

"The epicentre was located in eastern Bangladesh, between Sylhet and Mymensingh areas," a spokesman from the seismological centre in Shilong, capital of Meghalaya state, said.

People ran outside their homes as buildings shook in the quake-prone region, witnesses said.

"I just grabbed my two-year-old son and started running down the stairs as images of the horrific Gujarat quake was fresh in our minds," said Sangeeta Das, a housewife in Guwahati.

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B'baria clashes 2 committees complete inquiry

UNB, Brahmanbaria

Two probe bodies have completed inquiry into a series of clashes in which at least seven people were killed in police firing last week.

During the last few days, members of both the committees visited all the trouble spots, including the NGO offices damaged by some aggrieved people, and recorded depositions from witnesses.

"One inquiry committee formed by the police department has been asked to submit its report by February 16 while the government's probe committee will give its report very soon," an official source said.

The three-government's inquiry committee is headed by Additional Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong Golam Kibria. Its members are Additional DIG (Chittagong range) Waliar Rahman and Additional District Magistrate of Brahmanbaria ASMA Abdul Wahab.

DIG of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Kazi Nazrul Islam heads the other committee. Additional DIG Waliar Rahman and M Habibur Rahman of Special Branch are the members of the committee.

100 'hideouts' of drug traffickers demolished

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday demolished over 100 hideouts of drug traffickers at Skid ghat.

The drive was launched in presence of a magistrate.

The drug traffickers had been using the hideouts for long to sell drugs such as heroin, phensidyl, and hemp, police said.

Police also demolished some shops constructed illegally at the ghat.

But none was arrested in connection with maintaining the hideouts and selling drugs in collusion with some officials of Narcotics Department and KMP, said businessmen at Skid ghat.

Mild tremor in Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A mild tremor shook Sylhet region yesterday morning. The tremor lasted about 5 seconds. People in many areas ran out of their houses in panic. The weather office here confirmed it but could say neither the intensity, nor duration as there is no equipment to observe the tremor.

There were no reports of damage or loss of life due to the tremor.

Stevedores stop gang booking at Mongla

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Stevedores at Mongla Port stopped gang booking for all ships yesterday morning terming demand of sewing labourers as illegal.

The sewing labourers are demanding appointment of extra hands in clinker and foodgrain carrying ships.

At present, there are nine ships at the port and all are loaded with imported rice, wheat and clinkers worth several crores of taka.

Demand for appointment of extra workers for sewing tarpaulin is illegal, said vice president of Mongla

Dacoity at a city house

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dacoits took away money in cash, gold ornaments and other valuables from a house at Shewrapara in the city in the early hours of yesterday.

A gang of six dacoits stormed into the house of Shamsul Haq at 484 Shewrapara at about 3 am and confined the inmates in a room at gunpoint, sources said.

They took away Tk 1 lakh, 12 tolas of gold ornaments, 9000 US dollars and a licensed revolver, police said.

A case was filed with Mirpur police station in this regard. Police could not arrest the culprits till filing of this report last night.

Are we consuming safe meat? Over 80pc of animals slaughtered in the city are unchecked

MORSHED ALI KHAN

Meat trade in the city is run virtually without any monitoring whatsoever.

Over eighty per cent of the animals slaughtered in the city are unchecked, Chief Veterinary Officer of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) Mohammed Azmat Ali admitted.

"With one abattoir at Hazaribagh and three smaller ones at Gulshan, Mirpur and Kashaituli, we can monitor less than 20 per cent of the entire meat market in the city," he said.

An estimated 2,500 cows and buffaloes and 3,000 goats and sheep are slaughtered in the city every day, he said.

Taking advantage of DCC's lapses, illegal meat shops have mushroomed to cater to the needs of about ten million people in the city. Hundreds of cows, buffaloes, goats, sheep and pigs are slaughtered unchecked every day in most unhygienic conditions. Meat shops can be found at every nook and corner of the city.

Butchers at the pork market at Farm Gate expressed their surprise over the idea of checking animals before slaughter. They said no check is done before or after slaughter.

Even at DCC's abattoirs, the check-ups are not up to the standard. Butchers and meat traders say they can get DCC certificate for any animal they want.

At Hazaribagh, a butcher said he has to bribe the DCC representative for slaughtering any animal, be it fit or unfit.

Azmat Ali said, it is impossible to check a market for ten million people with only one abattoir for cows and buffaloes at Hazaribagh and one veterinary doctor.

An estimated 150,000 kilograms of beef and 21,000 kilograms of mutton are consumed in the city every day.

"Before and after slaughter, DCC is legally bound to check every animal and certify it for public consumption," said Azmat Ali.

"After slaughter, the vet's responsibility is to check different organs of the animal. If it is found that the heart or liver or any other organ is infected, the meat is not fit for human consumption," he said.

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In absence of effective monitoring, illegal street-side meat shops are mushrooming in the city.

SC to hear leave petition on Ershad's Rangpur-3 seat Wednesday

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division (APD) of the Supreme Court will hear a provisional leave petition on Wednesday for appeal against a High Court verdict vacating the Rangpur-3 seat of Jatiya Sangsad held by Jatiya Party chief HM Ershad on grounds of moral turpitude following his conviction in Janata Tower Case.

An order in this regard was given by Justice Mainur Reza Choudhury chamber, judge of the APD, yesterday upon a petition by the counsel of jailed former president Ershad who sought a stay of the High Court verdict.

The High Court on Tuesday vacated Ershad's seat in the parliament following a petition by a voter in his constituency and a leader of the rival faction of Jatiya Party led

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Shazneen case ASP of CID cross-examined, proceedings adjourned till February 25

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Mojibur Rahman, ASP of CID first prosecution witness as well as complainant in the Shazneen rape case, was cross-examined in the Special Court for Prevention of Women and Children repression, Dhaka yesterday.

After two hours' cross-examination by lawyers of accused Minu and Parvin Judge M Shah Alam Miah adjourned the proceedings till February 25. Mojibur will be cross-examined again on that day.

During the cross-examination, Mojibur Rahman said he took opinion of late PP Altaf Hossain regarding submission of chargesheets in Shazneen murder and rape cases.

Mojibur said he prayed for

discharging the four accused Hemayet, Yeashin, Shafiq and Farook in the murder case as the allegations against them were not proved.

He said the former investigation officer Mohammad Shamsul Haq took the four on a seven-day remand for interrogation on July 26, 1998.

After completion of seven days' remand, the investigation officer produced the four before the CMM's court Dhaka and prayed for sending them to the Dhaka Central Jail, Mojibur said.

The witness said that Shazneen had guardians to look after her who stayed at the same house. Shazneen had no other work at the house except studies, the witness added.

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