

Migration of rural people to urban areas has stopped: Hasina

AGENCIES, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said yesterday that no new slums grew up in the cities under the present government as it had taken several steps to encourage the people to stay in their villages.

"The trend of migration of rural people to urban areas has stopped because of the government's massive programmes to build a robust rural economy," she said while presiding over the seventh meeting of the "Housing Fund Trustee Board".

The Prime Minister said the government is providing money to slum dwellers, homeless people and low-income groups to build their own houses and get involved in economic activities.

The meeting was told that under the housing project, Tk 38.13 crore was released till April 15 this year to build 18,399 houses. These houses have already been completed.

The government has allocated Tk 47.10 crore to build another 23,550 more houses in different districts in four phases.

This project is being implemented by 61 non-government organisations who are disbursing the money as house building loans to the low-income group. The recovery rate is about 98 per cent.

Among the 61 NGOs, 21 will build houses in the fifth phase for which Tk 10.60 crore has been given.

Besides, the government will release Tk 8.80 crore through another 41 NGOs to build 4,200 houses.

All the housing projects are being implemented under a Tk 100-crore fund.

The meeting approved a project for the construction of a Female Hostel for garments factory workers and other working women of various professions.

The Tk 14.14 crore project, to be implemented by BRAC, will provide housing facilities for 20,000 working women on rental basis. Of the Taka 14.14 crore, the government would provide Tk 10 crore while the rest would be arranged by the BRAC.

At the meeting, Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria said housing fund has been considered as a major force in economic activities and mainly the low-income groups are being benefited by the fund.

Housing and Public Works Minister Engineer Mosarraf Hossain, State Minister for Land Alhaj Rashed Mosarraf, State Minister for Relief and Disaster Management Talukder Abdul Khaleque attended the meeting.



PHOTO: STAR

Sadia Islam Mou receiving the Meril-Prothom Alo Star Survey 2001 award for Best Female Model at a glittering ceremony in a local hotel on Tuesday night. Mou won the award for the third consecutive time.

US to deploy missile defences

FROM PAGE 12 defense against rogue states. "The idea that we should remain vulnerable to a Saddam Hussein or to Iran or to North Korea or to some other country that might get their hands on these capabilities . . . is so patently unwise and dangerous that the real questions have to be what are the risks if we don't deploy ballistic missile defense."

In a separate interview with Fox television, Rumsfeld also stressed the "constraining" nature of the ABM treaty.

The ABM treaty's proscription against national missile defences stemmed from concerns that having one in place might tempt either the United States or the Soviet Union to launch a first strike and rely on the system to knock out the retaliatory strike.

Cold War deterrence, on the other hand, depended on each side fearing that a first strike would result in mutual annihilation.

Bush stopped short of saying Washington would withdraw from the ABM accord, which is widely seen as the cornerstone of Cold War arms control.

But the president urged Russia

and US allies in Europe and Asia to help "replace this treaty with a new framework that reflects a clear and clean break from the past, and especially from the adversarial legacy of the Cold War."

Putin told Bush by telephone that Russia was ready to cooperate in dealing with possible threats to global security, but reiterated the need to maintain the cornerstone treaties that had so far ensured strategic stability.

Bush announced he was dispatching Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz and Steve Hadley, Bush's deputy national security advisor, to Europe, Asia Australia and Canada next week.

"These will be real consultations: We are not presenting our friends and allies with unilateral decisions already made," he promised in his first major speech on the subject since taking office January 20.

On Monday, Bush telephoned the leaders of Britain, Canada, France, Germany and the NATO secretary general to start the consultation process, and appraised Japan of his plans on Friday, White

House officials said.

In his speech, he indicated that he would also reach out to China.

"The leaders were pleased that we're sincere about our desire to go through consultations," he said in a brief appearance at the White House Rose Garden after the speech.

Bush's plan was praised by some US dailies as sound policy, while others took it with a pinch of salt.

"If his commitment to work with Washington's allies and with Russia proves evanescent," said The New York Times, "he could well start a dangerous and expensive new arms race."

The Wall Street Journal agreed with Bush's review of the ABM Treaty, saying that since 1972 "such upstanding members of the world community as North Korea, Iran, Iraq, Libya, China, Pakistan and India have called developed, bought or stolen the know-how to launch missiles at someone else.

"Better perhaps that we look at this matter, rather than not," the Journal concluded.

US not a safe haven

FROM PAGE 12 reason to believe that there won't be a free and fair election. "I understand that this is going to be a very hard-fought election."

She, in this regard, mentioned initiative of the diplomatic corps to get clear picture of the technical aspects of the vote in meetings with the Chief Election Commissioner.

Appreciating people's commitment to democracy, she said people here deserve a good election as they value their right to vote and voters' participation is higher than in the United States.

Asked about her impression of religious extremism in Bangladesh, she said the Bangladesh is a Muslim country and people here believe in their own culture of moderation, and "certainly it is something that we welcome".

She said extremism poses threat to stability around the world, particularly violent extremism. Citing what is happening in Afghanistan, she said no one would like to see it

happen in other places. Mary said she believes it (extremism) is foreign to the character of Bangladesh.

But she sounded a note of caution, saying: "We need to be aware of the fact that there are groups around the world that are violent and they could use Bangladesh as a base even if Bangladesh is not involved."

Asked if there is any qualitative change of US attitude towards Bangladesh with new US administration of President George W Bush, the Ambassador said Dhaka-Washington relationship had been growing and expanding over last 10 years.

"We've growing economic relation, growing investment relation and growing political relation," she told the OCAB members, adding that the Bush administration will continue to value a close relationship with Bangladesh. The relations, she said, are based on interests "our interest and your interest".

3 policemen hurt

FROM PAGE 1 disperse the attackers.

Police arrested Harunur Rashid, 25, Sirajul Islam, 20, and Jalal Miah, 30 from the area for their alleged involvement in the drug business.

Local people said that the gang went into hiding after the clash. Later police picked up three innocent people from the area, they said.

A case was filed with Sabujbagh police station in this regard.

Students body

FROM PAGE 1 border with military combat troops or face a complete shutdown.

The union demand followed the worst border skirmishes in 30 years, which left 19 frontier guards dead, including 16 on the Indian side.

The AASU had also argued that the paramilitary guards were proving ineffective in preventing illegal immigrants crossing the border.

Newsman demand Sixth Wage Board awards

BSS, Dhaka

BFUJ and DUJ leaders at a meeting on Tuesday demanded immediate announcement of the Sixth Wage Board awards and implementation of the Fifth Wage Board awards in the newspaper industry.

Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) and Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) jointly organised the meeting to mark the May Day.

The leaders expressed concern over the attacks on newspaper offices and newsmen across the country and demanded of the authorities to arrest the attackers.

DUJ President Altaf Mahmud chaired the meeting held at the Jatiya Press Club (JPC).

Among others, BFUJ president Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, secretary general Akhtar Ahmed Khan, DUJ general secretary Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan, JPC General Secretary Swapan Kumar Saha, former DUJ general secretary Azizul Islam Bhuiyan, BFUJ treasurer Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul and joint secretary general Shah Mohammad Alamgir spoke on the occasion.

Dislodge

FROM PAGE 12

Awami League government could not explain the reasons for border tensions and incidents as they have come to power by giving an undertaking to be subservient to India.

"This government remains tightlipped," she told the rally, adding: "We didn't gain independence at anybody's mercy but through war."

The BNP chief asked the local people to strengthen the hand of former MP of Demra Salahuddin Ahmed for the development of the area, pledging to meet the local demand for setting up a hospital for labourers of the area.

BNP leaders Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Moudud Ahmed, Mirza Abbas, Sadek Hossain Khoka, Nazrul Islam Khan and Amanullah Aman, among others, also addressed the rally. It was presided over by Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal president Abdullah Al Noman.

Ershad

FROM PAGE 1

going on and I am very much hopeful about it," Ershad said yesterday.

But he is totally opposed to merger with the JP faction led by Naziur Rahman Monzur. "Impossible. There would not be any merger with that group. Naziur and his followers would rather participate in the election using BNP's election symbol" he said.

Regarding his move for forming an alliance with some pro-Islamic political parties, he said there is plenty of time before the election to form an alliance.

Since his release from jail on April 8, Ershad approached leaders of a number of pro-Islamic parties, but there has been no progress.

Ershad quit the four-party opposition alliance after his release. It is alleged by the alliance that Ershad has a deal with the government and is working as per the deal.

Diarrhoea

FROM PAGE 12 diarrhoeal attack in the city in this season is nothing unusual, but this year the number of affected people is much higher than in previous years.

The simplest treatment for diarrhoea is to give the patient re-hydration therapy. Normally, oral therapy is recommended. In serious cases, intravenous therapy is required but that should be done in consultation with doctor.

Doctors say, if diarrhoea persists for a week or bleeding occurs, one should consult doctor.

Govt to resolve border conflict

FROM PAGE 1

The meeting was told that Bangladesh had kept channels open for dialogues at various levels to defuse tensions across the border.

The meeting was also told that a summit-level meeting between Indian and Bangladeshi prime ministers has not been finalised as yet. Earlier, press reports hinted that such a meeting might take place when Hasina is scheduled to make a stopover in New Delhi on her return from Brussels on May 17.

"This has not been finalized, as yet," said a minister without elaborating further.

The meeting decided to observe 'Shukrana Dibash' tomorrow (Friday) to express gratitude to the almighty for the verdict in the Bangabandhu murder case.

Besides, the LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman gave a detailed report on various development works being carried out in different districts of the country.

The prime minister asked ministers to oversee the ongoing development projects in different districts to ensure their speedy implementation keeping the upcoming general elections in view.

Status of various development projects under the LGRD and Cooperatives Ministry came up for

serious discussions during two subsequent cabinet meetings on April 23 and April 30.

The government made high-level changes in some divisions under the ministry and ordered for allocation of additional volume of wheat to speed up the works.

About criticism regarding allocation of additional volume of wheat prior to the polls, official sources said the allocation was given to speed up development works and had no links with the upcoming parliamentary polls.

A minister claimed that no favour was done to any particular area while allocating wheat. He also said that equal allocation was given to all areas, no matter which constituency belongs to which party.

Hearing on petitions

FROM PAGE 1

family members on August 15, 1975. All the 15 are either retired or dismissed army officers.

Four of the convicts - Lt. Col (dismissed) Syed Faruqur Rahman, Lt. Col (Rtd) Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan, Major (Rtd) Bazul Huda and Lt Col (Rtd) Mohiuddin Ahmed are in the death row at Dhaka Central Jail. The rest are absconding, believed to be out of the country.

West Bengal intellectuals

FROM PAGE 1

quite similar. However, even after such an incident, I feel the warmth between the people of Bangladesh and West Bengal will remain. A stray incident cannot destroy the feelings of respect that we have developed for one another.

Aparna Sen (film personality): I am not a person to really comment on the entire issue. All that I can say that in the 21st century we are all civilised enough to discuss and solve problems. Futile killings will pave the way for more violent situations. That should be averted at all costs.

Muzzafar Khan (vice-president of the BJP in West Bengal): Such a situation could have been easily avoided if both parties had exercised restraint. I am a politician. So I would like to take all issues to the discussion table. The people of West Bengal and Bangladesh have always been very warm towards one another. This is probably the first step to destroy that relation. So we should prevent it at any cost.

Moreover, I also feel that soldiers of a similar language could have been posted in the border areas. The moment you speak a similar language a number of tense situations can be diffused. At the same

time, I would like to state that the killings in cold blood could have been avoided. The BDR could have easily handed back the soldiers to the Indian authorities.

Dr Dilip Ghose (vice-chancellor of Viswabharti University): India and Bangladesh have always enjoyed very cordial relations. However, there are some that do not want this relation to prosper. So we have to be careful about these unwanted elements. The Bangladesh government has certain claims regarding land. If so, discussions can be started to solve the problem. Fighting across the border is not the only solution. The bottom line, however, is that we in West Bengal have a strange sort of a bond with the Bangladeshis. Maybe because we speak the same language, have a similar sort of culture and celebrate the same festivals. So to us the killings have come as a shock. Things could have been handled in a subtle manner.

Rituparna Sengupta (actress): I am not really the person to comment on this issue. All I can say is that I will still have the best of relations with my friends across the border.

HC order goes unheeded

FROM PAGE 12

roads in Eskaton area. According to a DCC official, Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP) has been installing the slabs on city roads in different areas to make separate lanes for rickshaws. The slabs are being constructed for the last two months at a makeshift factory, which is occupying a portion of Eskaton Garden Road.

Slabs have also been piled up on pavements of the Old Elephant Road in Eskaton area. Pavement of the other side of the same road have been entirely occupied by construction materials for an under-construction multi-storied building nearby.

Piled-up construction materials on roads and pavements was a common sight during a visit to Dhanmondi, Uttara, Kathalbagan, Central Road, Mohammadpur, Mirpur and Khilgaon areas.

Talking to this correspondent,

many residents in those areas said besides piling-up of construction materials on roads, preparatory work like making brick chips, straightening roads and mixing materials are mostly done on roads, which damage the roads and create inconvenience to residents.

When contacted, the Chief Estate Officer (CEO) of DCC denied the allegation that DCC was doing nothing to stop piling-up of construction materials on roads.

The DCC will file cases in a couple of days against the firms who piled up construction materials on the Manik Mia Avenue, he said.

"Whenever we receive any such complaint, we file case after investigation".

He however expressed his ignorance about piling-up of concrete slabs on portions of two roads in Eskaton area.

Two hurt as rivals clash

FROM PAGE 1

Campus sources said a group of terrorists including former student of Soil Science Department of DU Shaheen and outsiders Robin, Pintu, Titu, Chandan and Sayed sat for a meeting in the said room at around 7:30 p.m. to reach an understanding over sharing money from a Tk 18-lakh tender of the Bangla Academy.

Shaheen who completed his master's degree four years ago, along with the youths, had been using the room for various illegal purposes. The hall authorities despite repeated drives failed to oust them from the hall, sources said.

Students of the hall said they heard at least four gunshots fired at about 8:30 p.m. The incident raised a huge hue and cry and chases and counter-chases between the terrorists, creating tension among the residents of the hall. Some youths picked up the wounded in an auto-rickshaw and left the hall immediately at 8:40 p.m.

BCL sources said Sayed was operated on at his uncle's Nirupam Clinic at Dhanmondi, while Pintu removed his bullet at his Kalabagan residence. The condition of Sayed is critical. None of them was admitted to hospital with a view to avoiding arrest, sources said.

BSF beefing up strength

FROM PAGE 1

In Kurigram, deployment of BSF troops and heavy equipment has panicked people in the bordering villages, forcing many to leave their homes.

In view of the tense situation there, BSF authorities were trying for a Sector Commander-level meeting.

Reports reaching from Thakurgaon said tension mounted and villagers became panicky following BSF reinforcements in Paria area of the district, which also led the BDR to take forward positions.

BDR personnel were later withdrawn and brought back to the BDR outpost, hoping that this would defuse the tension.

Meanwhile BDR has withdrawn another company of troops from Roumari frontier as a good gesture to help restore total normalcy in the area where clashes had occurred on April 18. Efforts were on to hold more meetings between BDR and BSF at the levels of battalion and company com-

manders.

Reports from Akhaura said a Battalion Commander-level meeting was held there on Tuesday in a bid to defuse tension.

Our Sylhet Correspondent reported that the situation in different frontiers in the district still remained tense.

BSF has reinforced its strength on the other side of the border at Lathitila, Nayagram and Sutarkandi under Beanibazar thana in Sylhet district and at Latu under Baralekha thana in Moulvibazar district.

Panicked villagers in the border areas do not stay at homes after dusk fearing attack, many villagers told this correspondent during a visit to the areas.

A Battalion Commander-level flag meeting was held at Dholai border outpost (BOP) in Srimongol yesterday. Details could not be known as the BDR officials did not return to the battalion headquarters at Srimongol till 7:30 p.m.